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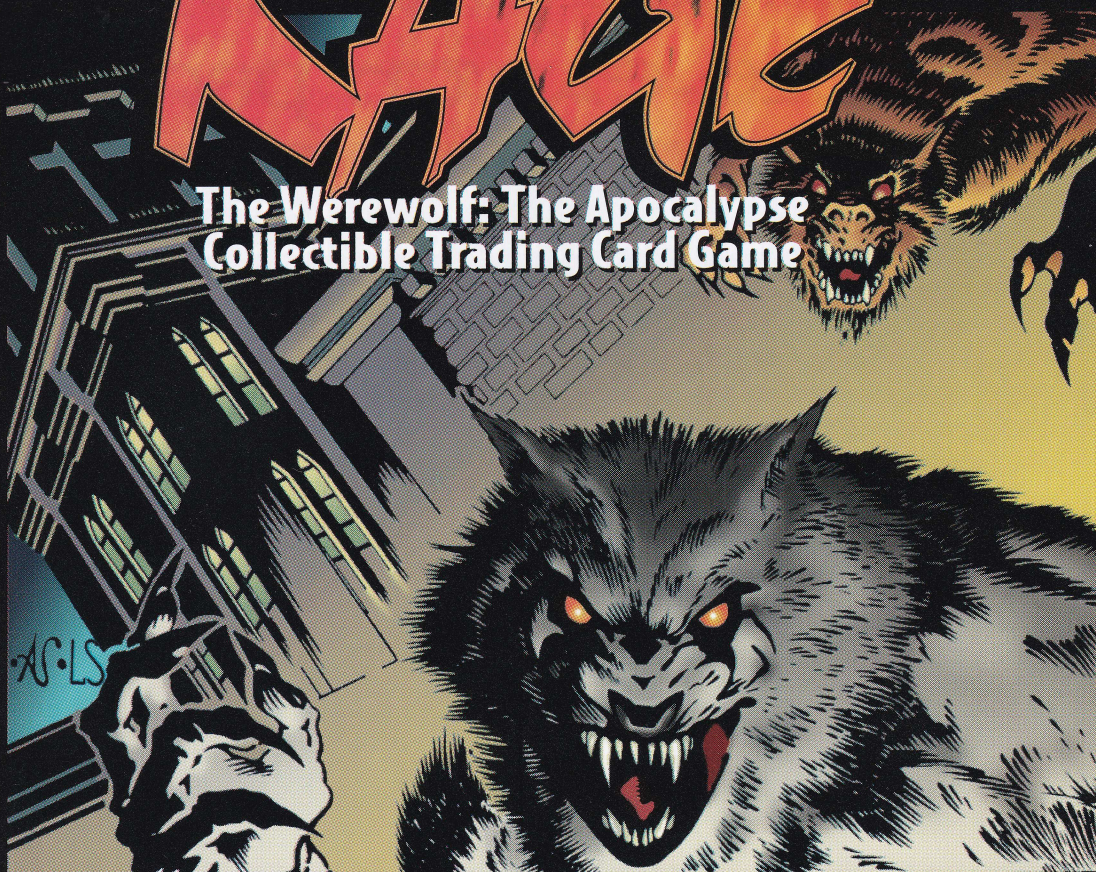
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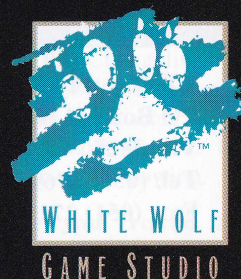
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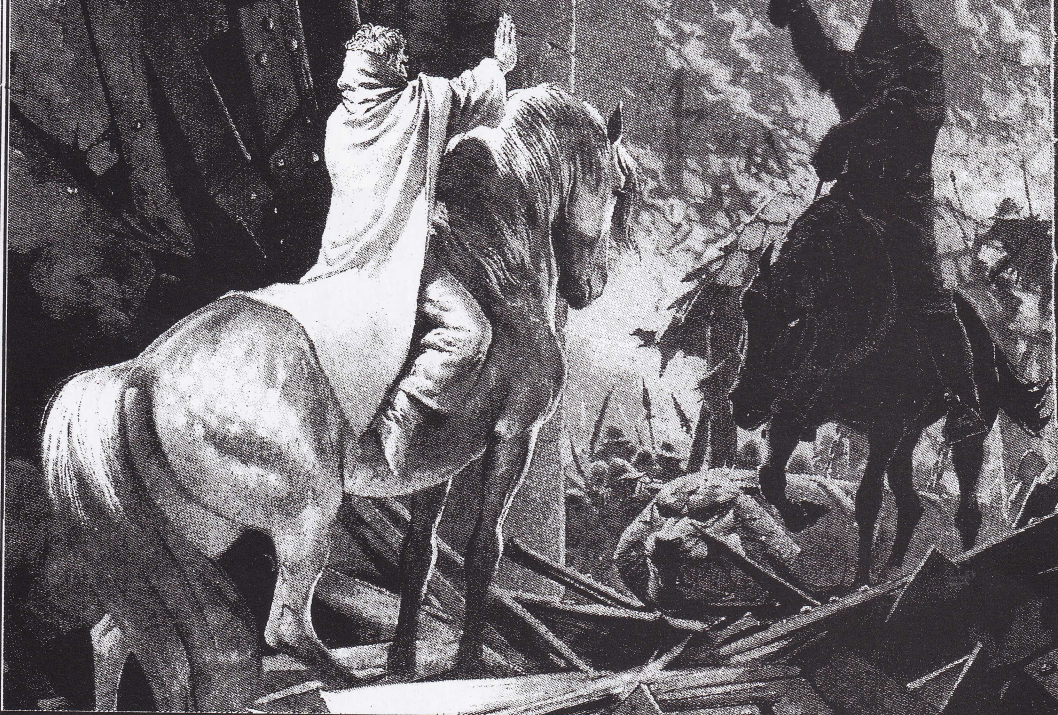
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Editorial Letters

Unlike many editorials that you read which start out saying "I wrote this two months ago..." I'm actually writing this the day before we go to press. Writing this is generally the last thing I do each issue. I like to have the magazine all squared away before I sit down to reflect on the issue that is about to be born, and say a few things about the expected new arrival. But I can't get my mind around what it is I want to say this time because it is 11.45PM on Anzac Day and all I can think about is...

What *was* it like to be on that beach at Gallipoli 80 years ago? With the bullets and shells screaming, and many of your mates dying around you, and nowhere to go to escape the horror? What those men and woman (?) experienced is inconceivable to my comfortably sheltered imagination.

It's said that Gallipoli and Anzac Cove was where the Australian nation came of age, and that the Anzac spirit that was forged there became the new spirit of our young nation. That's why we commemorate the occasion with the Anzac Day remembrance holiday. These are powerful images, magical modern day myths and legends born out of a very real, very bloody, and, for the soldiers (heroes) that suffered through them, very traumatic historic events. I don't wish to trivialise the significance of Anzac, but it is fascinating to me the way history shapes us. When role-playing we should look to explore the meanings behind our mythology.

As Australia moves toward the year 2000 and moulds itself into a Republic, I wonder what other myths and legends will define our national character? What other past events will prove significant to us as we look to the future and a new identity? I, for one, am eager to find out.

NS Leung

Gary Jerram
Modbury Heights, SA

Dear Nick & Co,

Even though I am re-subbing, there are a couple of things that rankle in an otherwise excellent magazine:

Unae, while obviously well thought out and plotted, seems to be slowly taking over the magazine (six pages at last count), pages which are a complete waste if you don't game in Unae. Perhaps you could offer Unae as a separate fanzine in much the same way that the late Gargoyle was and therefore free up pages inside Realms for more articles. If this doesn't appeal, how about printing the Unae items in the centre so that they can be pulled out and kept in a separate file instead of having to carry 20 issues of Realms around with you. (Incidentally, have you thought of making Unae a TM, ®, ©, TSR, before the big boys muscle in?).

Is it possible to lose the "I think your magazine is great" comments that seem to start every letter in the Letters page (and seem to be the only reason some people have written in)? While true, they do tend to make really boring reading the tenth time around. Normally, I turn to the Letters page of a magazine first, looking forward to some virulent debate about something or other, or a new perspective on something. Unfortunately, the Realms' Letters pages seems rather flat. But like I said, apart from that it's a damn good read.

Gary, most readers have asked for MORE Unae. And this issue their wish has come true. But do not fear, Unae will not take over the magazine. And if you are not playing fantasy then perhaps you'll be interested in our Sol Space campaign which will be starting up soon - cyberpunk in space!

Regards the content of letters, perhaps your comments will stir the pot, <grin>.

Jillian Andersen
Perth, WA

Dear Editors,

I applaud your support of trading card games. Whilst not being a player (yet!) I totally agree that trading cards will lure people into gaming shops who might otherwise never have ventured in. If we reject every new development proclaiming it is not traditional, too mainstream, or (*quelle horreurs!*) too POPULAR we are only setting up our hobby for stagnation, marginalisation and eventual death.

Jillian, exactamundo!

Dirk Remmecke
Hemmingen, GER

Dear Nick,

Greetings from Germany. Don't hop on the bandwagon! Please remove Card Magic Magazine from AR. I read your editorial on card games entering the RPG hobby, and even though your vision is very clever and not entirely wrong it won't work. There are too many cards only magazines on the market for card gamers to choose from (Duelist, Scrye, InQuest...). Why buy a magazine that has only six to ten pages on card games when you can have a hundred pages (in slick colour printing) for the same price? German RPG magazines are trying to meet the competition the same way you do, with questionable success. Pure role-playing gamers hate it to lose space (in terms of page count) to "those pesky cards" while die-hard card gamers want "full treatment". German Magic-fans keep buying English-language magazines even though nearly every German magazine has its share of card game coverage. I am writing this as an avid Magic fan myself! But if I want card listings, checklists, prices guides, or gossip I'll turn to Scrye of The Duellist.

Anyway, keep up the good work!

Dirk, although we don't look to compete directly with the "cards only" magazine, I still think Card Magic has a role to play in Australian Realms. There is a lot of cross-over between role-players and card players and we want to encourage that. Plus, in Australia, we have a large newsstand distribution which none of the magazines you listed have - for many of our readers Card Magic is the only card coverage they've encountered. What do others think?

Steve Durham
Bradbury, NSW

Dear Guys,

Imagine my embarrassment when I received your guidelines just one day after I sent my last (cranky) letter to you. I hurriedly contacted the Scuntha Assassin and told her the job was off, I still had to pay though. She said something about the job never being finished until its finished, but I wouldn't worry too much if I were you (but then I'm not, am I).

Well I've finished issue 22. Not bad, not bad at all. I particularly enjoyed Brad Martin's article, "To The Village Born", but Brad, I feel that you may have passed too quickly over one or two important points. Firstly, the average medieval village had no ships, even ale-houses were not always present, as many farm wives brewed their husband's ale themselves. If you wanted a shop you went to a town where the

population was large enough for people to specialise, or you waited for Market Day. This was usually a once a week event although in some places it was as infrequent as once a month. If you couldn't wait that long then you bartered with the locals.

This is the next problem. Your average peasant is going to be less interested in gems than in cash and less interested in cash than in useful goods, unavailable or scarce in the local area (remember, the usefulness of an item is relative; a day's labour is probably going to be of more value to a villen than a suit of elven chain mail).

The next problem is the local smith. The art of the weaponsmith was as different to blacksmithing as riding a push bike is to riding a Harley, and the craft of the armourer was more specialised again, so much so that you would only find one in a city or at a Royal Palace. Your average blacksmith could probably manage a few unattractive but functional repairs, but a new breastplate or helm? No chance! A replacement for that broken long sword? How about a nice pitch fork instead?

There are a few books you might be interested in, Brad-Michael Wood, *Domesday A Search for the Roots of England* (not as naughty as it sounds), BBC Publications, 1986; R.T. Rowley, *The Origins of Open-field Agriculture*, Croom Helm, 1981; and

C.Taylor, *Village and Farmstead*, George Philip, 1983. If you are interested in adding a little authentic local colour try J.H.G. Grattan & C. Singer, *Anglo-Saxon Magic & Medicine*, Oxford University Press, 1952 and B. Branston, *The Lost Gods of England*, Thames & Hudson, 1957 (reprinted 1974).

You hit the nail on the head, Brad; interaction is not only desirable, it's essential to any Role Playing game, and to get what you need from a medieval village you need to interact (and improvise) in a big way.

Finally, a message to Ron [Peter Crank, I think, see *Analytical Engine* issue 22 - Nick]. To maintain the (dubious) sanity of your computer there are a couple of things you should NOT do: 1. Never listen to Lou Reid whilst using your computer. 2. Never think about 'a penis thing' whilst using your computer. 3. For your own well-being, never, ever listen to Lou Reid whilst thinking about 'a penis thing'.

Steve, firstly, I'm not going to touch the Lou Reid penis thing or the coloured girls will be singing "Do, da-do, da-do..."

Most of the points you made in your letter complement Brad's article nicely, and both sets of observations pretty much accord with the way the Unae campaign operates - gritty fantasy based in reality.

One thing I would query with you is what a blacksmith could and could not achieve. I'd say a blacksmith (especially one in a war or frontier zone where weapons and armour are in high demand) would have enough nous to be able to make rudimentary items. After all, many pole arms were just plough shares mounted on a big stick. One of our writers (Bill McConnell - see his article on arrows this issue) is a self-taught blacksmith who makes swords, armour and more for his metal weapons reenactment group. If a 20th century Medical Scientist working from diagrams can work it out, surely a fully-skilled medieval blacksmith with the real thing in front of him has some chance!

Dear Realms Readers, getting back to what Gary said about the Letters page being dull, I wonder if others of you agree with him? And if you do, what you are prepared to do about it? It is a bit of a cop-out on my part, but the fact is we can only print the letters that we receive. If you'd like to ask us a question, or make an observation about the magazine or the role-playing hobby, or just tell us "What is your favourite colour" write to:

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Technothriller RPG, GM's Companion,
Miami, & Ultramodern Firearms sourcebooks
By Chameleon Eclectic
Reviewed by Lee Sheppard

Millennium's End has already been out for a couple of years in the United States; the basic rulebook we received is designated as Version 2.0. As a consequence, the game is already well supported with a number of products (in addition to those reviewed here) including adventure scenarios, sourcebooks, T-shirts, and miniatures.

The Millenium's End RPG is set in 1999 in a world almost, but not exactly, like our own. It is our Earth, but with present history tweaked just a little bit to add some dramatic elements - not that we need much more drama when we've terrorists attacking the public with homemade Sarin and 500kg car bombs. The game takes players into the world of the technothriller (eg. Tom Clancy's books, and movies such as *Die Hard* and *Rising Sun*), with players taking on the exciting roles of operatives working for Blackeagle, a high-tech, "problem-solver" corporation.

The basic rulebook covers character creation, game rules, combat and an introduction to the Millenium's End campaign setting. A word of warning here, folks - we're dealing with fairly complex rules in these pages, with armed combat taking into account such things as damage factors, hydrostatic shock and wound trauma (Peter Crank, eat your heart out!!!). While this realism might put some "storyteller" fans off the game, given the nature of the RPG setting these rules are quite appropriate, and play relatively smoothly, with well documented examples making things much simpler for the novice gamer.

campaign in a modern or near-future setting. This supplement is packed with useful information - just the sort of stuff that saves overworked GMs hours of prep time. Here you will find dozens of useful maps and floorplans, staging tips, adventure hooks, some nifty information on corporate, military, criminal organisations (eg. who reports to who), and computer networks. It even provides an excellent "ethnic-based" name generator (never worry about the name of that Cuban hit-man again!). If you bought nothing else from this company - buy this supplement - highly recommended.

For those of you who care about such things (and a look at my bookcase quickly confirms that I fit this category), the **Ultramodern Firearms** sourcebook describes, in no-nonsense terms, what you can find stocking the arsenals of the world's armies and police forces. With sections on pistols, SMGs, assault rifles and so on, this supplement provides, in one handy reference book, all that the firearms-virgin would need to know (at least as far as role-playing goes). *No way* Nick's getting this back...

The **Miami** sourcebook is the most recent release for the Millenium's End game, and covers the city that the TV show *Miami Vice* made (in)famous in the 1980's. Miami holds the headquarters of the Blackeagle Central and South American division, and thereby serves as a jump-off point for campaigns in those areas. The city itself is fully detailed, with law enforcement and criminal factions chapters sharing space with traditional "location descriptions". This is a well-researched and presented sourcebook, and, if not used as is, could easily serve as an excellent model for your own modern city-based campaigns.

SOUTH AMERICA

Rifts World Book 6

By Palladium Books

Reviewed by Andrew Daniels

South America, the latest in the seemingly endless stream of new products from the Palladium team, is World Book 6 for their science fantasy role-playing game, Rifts. Based on many of the traditional legends associated with South America, you get some half-dozen new kingdoms to explore including Pirate Kingdoms, Inca-like cities of Jaguar People, Colombian War Lord territories and even the odd rumour of the fabled Cities of Gold. All are given the idiosyncratic Palladium treatment which means many kinky twists that serve to rejuvenate the overused source material. Alongside this is the expected assortment of new weapons and armour, including some very nice looking Conquistador-style battle armour.

Rifts South America is still dominated by Amazonian forest, and so there is a strong jungle theme running throughout this book. Giant Vampire Bats, Jungle Elves, Were-Tigers and Lion People all make an appearance. A welcome addition is a new form of magic, Biomancy, which allows the caster to transform animals and plants into whatever is required to help the situation without actually causing harm to the plant or creature. Very environmentally friendly.

South America is also interspersed with a goodly collection of new monsters. I love this stuff. An instant attention grabber is the Ellal, or South Ameircan undead. To survive, the little beggar needs to murder one intelligent creature per month. Now that's a fun career move. Following this is a giant killer squid to warm my Scuba diving heart! New O.C.C.'s include my personal favourite, the Anti-Monster. A 2.1 metre tall killing Mystic Cyborg brute with a hatred towards all things supernatural (which means half the planet in Rifts). Only thing is, he looks worse than most of the the stuff he's out to eradicate!

The sourcebook ends with a great little scenario idea involving a Rifted Demon who runs a fleet of Black Demon Ships cruising from the Nightmare Isle. The writer, C.J. Carella, supplies the main characters and some suggested plotlines, and details the workings of these demonic vessels, leaving a story brimming with ideas for the referee to customise as he sees fit.

The artwork in **South America** is very good which complements the excellent Brom cover painting. For those already into Rifts, this is another must. For those who have not discovered this treasure trove game of adventuresome fun, take a peak, it offers enough fresh ideas to revitalise most role-playing systems. Value for money.

DANGEROUS PREY

Whispering Vault supplement

By Pariah Press

Reviewed by Malcolm Adler

Dangerous Prey is a sourcebook for **The Whispering Vault** game, a game in the horror genre that I highly recommend. This product is over a hundred pages, and full of art that is always of high quality. Like the main rule book, this supplement is full of beautiful text and art, creating an atmosphere that puts games like *Vampire* and *Werewolf* on a list of 'has been horrors'. Do I like *The Whispering Vault*? No, I love it.

Dangerous Prey is basically a companion to the rule book, it has optional new rules and essays suggesting ways to run TWV, as well as including a twenty page 'Hunt' (adventure scenario). It follows the admirable attitude of the rule book, in being light on mechanics and heavy on flavour - Pariah can cook!

Pariah Press obviously has many links to FASA Corporation, something which shows in the quality of finish and in the feel of the game (not to mention the credits). I would suggest that anyone who has been waiting for FASA to do a horror game should check out TWV as it is probably the closest to such a product you'll ever get.

Dangerous Prey is a good buy for those playing a TWV game, adding material to the experience which will no doubt be looked for after the first few hunts are completed. If you have never played TWV and are interested in trying a horror game, pick it up, but be warned it is intended for the experienced role player. Very good, huge potential. Congratulations to all involved.

NIGHT CITY TRAX

Cyberpunk 2020 Mood Music

By Gold Rush Games

Reviewed by Malcolm Adler

Cyberpunk - Night City Trax is a cassette recording produced under license from R.Talsorian Games designed to be used as a role-playing aid to *Cyberpunk 2020*. This is techno-oriented mood music to set tone and atmosphere for your gaming session. With tracks entitled *Neural Spiral*, *Wilderspace* and *Netrun* all of the music is electronically generated featuring computer-aided composition and no lyrics, and for its purpose generally quite good. The tracks range from evocative through interesting down to some which are mediocre.

Night City Trax could also be used as background for other games such as *Shadowrun* and *GURPS Cyberpunk*, setting the tone for the night's adventure. For that matter there is a good deal of music out there that is available and suitable as atmospheric soundtrack backing for 'punk gaming

sessions, notably *Severed Heads*, and many others depending on the flavour of your campaign. Using background music while role-playing is an interesting idea, one that more people should make use of.

Atmospheric.

THE COMPLETE BOOK OF NECROMANCERS

AD&D Accessory

By TSR Inc

Reviewed by Adam Whitt

There has to be something schizoid about a company that will not countenance devils and demons in its game universe but will quite happily produce **The Complete Book of Necromancers**. If these rotting-entrail finerklers are not every bit as equipped to offend as the colourfully titled *Type V Demon* (1st Edition AD&D) then I'll go paint my bum half black, half white and walk naked down the Hay Street Mall with a dead chicken for a hand bag. Not that I'm complaining mind you, the idea of new powers for supervil NPCs appeals to a certifiable scaremonger like myself.

So what have we got here? 128 pages of new stuff for necromancers - NPC wizard and priest kits, non-weapon proficiencies, vile pacts, dark gifts, afflictions, handicaps, spells, secret cults and societies, evil allies and grim tools. Everything you'd ever need when mucking about with the dead. And all of it designed for NPCs only. Like hell.

Referees everywhere, beware. Do not let your loose hang nails to fall into the snack bowl lest your players find and use them in strange and necrotic rituals to manipulate you into allowing *them* to play a necromancer.

Chapter 9 of the book is devoted to a mini-campaign set on the dread, jungle-covered island of Sahu (map supplied, the setting actually reminded me of an old Abbot and Costello movie featuring zombies). The plot suggestions are really quite sound, and the NPCs interesting and *really* tough. This could easily be expanded out with a bit of work and present your players with a very entertaining role-playing challenge - mixing combat with exploration, intrigue and diplomacy. BYO Holy Symbol!

Actually, there are a lot of good ideas in this book, especially for referees wanting a really tough necromancer nemesis for their players. And there are loads of good adventure hooks and campaign resources lurking beneath its colourless exterior. Its just a pity that TSR have to package their writer's good material in such dry as dust formats (no doubt deemed suitable for general consumption). The poor artwork, dull presentation, excessive jargon, and the need to explain everything twice tends to drain all the (un)life from this potentially enthralling subject matter.

Overall, I'd rate this as better than the average "Complete Book of..." but not outstanding compared with other dark roleplaying materials available out there.



LEGACY: WAR OF AGES

Techno-Gothic RPG

By Black Gate Publishing

Reviewed by Adam Whitt

This is a game that deserves to do well, but will probably suffer in competition with the story-teller games that it seeks to emulate. Black Gate just don't have the marketing muscle of a company like White Wolf, and possibly don't quite have their finger on the pulse of what makes the techno-gothic punk tick. I really enjoyed reading this rulebook because it had the look and feel of a White Wolf product without the arty-farty pretentious bullshit that tends to smother the great ideas and themes of the White Wolf games. Yet, to a colleague of mine, that was what he liked least - its perceived lack of deep, gloomy atmosphere.

So, what is **Legacy: War of Ages** about? Well, its a role-playing game set in a "techno-gothic" world (which basically means our world with the boring facts changed to make things more 'interesting'), and is a thinly veiled rendition of the *Highlander* series of movies. Players get to take on the role of Immortals "infused with the primal forces of life and vitality", who can "shrug off injuries that would kill an ordinary being", who do not age after a certain point in their lives, and who cannot be killed except by having their spine severed between heart and head ie. by having their head hacked off! When they do die the "energies released... are wild and potent" and the killer, if also an Immortal, partakes of this energy and experiences "the Rapture". What all these means, is characters spend a lot of time training with a bladed weapon (ideally a samurai sword 'cos they're way cool), preparing for the day that another Immortal comes along to challenge them to a duel in order to take their power.

Given the popularity of the movies, and the many *combat* freaks already out there in RPGdom, this use of the *Highlander* premise should be a winner. And for good measure, Black Gate have spiced up the setting with some interesting twists, giving it a lot of potential for exploration by the angst-driven *story-telling* faction. The trouble is, I suspect the game may fall somewhere between these two, apparently opposed, RPG consumer camps.

The game system plays straightforward enough with characters created by generating an abstract first (background, personality, appearance, goals and broadly defined abilities), before adding the fine detail with numbers for standard RPG statistics like Intellect, Agility/Strength, Presence and Psyche. Each of these base stats define the character's Abilities (knowledge, skills and proficiencies) and are initially rated between 1 to 5, but can be improved as the character

increases in experience. Any Task (action) a character attempts in the game requires a dice roll under the relevant Statistic or Ability and the target number can be modified by the referee assigning a Task Modifier (-4 to +4) dependent on the perceived difficulty of the task. If this sounds familiar that's because it is. No sense completely reinventing the wheel when it comes to game mechanics unless you have a really brilliant and innovative game concept which needs a new engine to cope with it. A game like that doesn't come along too often.

Legacy: War of Ages does everything it sets out to do with a pleasing style and economy of effort. I can really dig where the author, Brandon Blackmoor, is coming from. A *role-player* who's prepared to work out a compromise with the *roll-players*. For me, he's designed a game that's easily understood, simple to play, and provides a lot of fun and entertainment. The dark elements of a techno-gothic world are there, but they don't overwhelm me nor send me into fits of depression.

Try it, I'm sure you'll enjoy it.

HÔL

Science-Fiction RPG Spoof

By Black Dog Publishing (White Wolf)

Reviewed by Adam Whitt

I can see why Nick gave this wacky product to me to review. Its a bit like me, really - tremendously silly. Did you ever see one of those Monty Python movie script books - full of silly in-jokes and slapped together like some artifact that had slipped off John Cleese's desk and into the waste paper basket only to be retrieved by a pepper-pot cleaning lady and sold to the Daily Mirror. Well, this game, produced by Dirt Merchant Games and sold to White Wolf to publish under their new "arty-farty bullshit" product line (Black Dog), is just a lot like that.

Hôl (Human Occupied Landfill) is an improbably weird penal colony planet, beyond the edge of an improbably weird empire, in an improbably weird future setting, which you probably will never want to play in. The whole thing is a running joke based on the fact that gamers are geeks, game writers are geeks talking to geeks, and games companies are geeks who employ geeks to talk to geeks. Every RPG convention is viciously and effectively lampooned and it all made me laugh until I was crying out: "I wish I'd said that!"

But, like I said, the book is more an artifact than a game product, and should not be judged by its cover (which is excellent), but by the fact that the last laugh of this howlingly amusing joke is being had by Dirt Merchant and White Wolf as they count all the money they are making. Ha! ha! ha!

1ST SOMERSET STRIKERS

BattleTech/Mechwarrior Sourcebook

By FASA Corporation

Reviewed by Ron Fielding

Paraphrasing a section of the intro, the 1st Somerset Strikers of the title are a freelance military unit on a mission to fight the Clan invaders and liberate their leader's homeworld of Somerset from the clutches of Clan Jade Falcon. Which is also basically the broad synopsis of the animated BattleTech cartoon series currently showing on television throughout the USA. Wish I were there!

1st Somerset Strikers is a highly polished product which is a companion to the animated series and unashamedly designed to hook in the young viewers of the cartoons into the many other products FASA have generated around their awesomely successful BattleTech universe - wargame, role-playing game, VR centres, novels, software, plastic toys, etc, etc.

The book is 130-odd pages of which the first 80 are all full gloss colour and feature heaps of great art from the animated series. The book provides a complete synopsis of each episode of the animated series, a rundown on the major characters, 'mechs, vehicles, spacecraft and special equipment featured in the series - all presented so as to please and tease the uninitiated, yet also be useful as a campaign sourcebook for the experienced BattleTech player. The latter part of the book gives information on staging each of the main combat sequences from the series as a linked campaign of scenarios for BattleTech. Coupled with the wealth of background detail offered, this would make a great Mechwarrior campaign.

The section I enjoyed reading the most was the 'Designer Notes' where the FASA design staff explained what they had to do to make their universe fit a Saturday morning cartoon format. There were a few changes that had to be made to history and technology, and even to themes and tone, but none of them so jarring as to put off this dedicated BattleTech fan. And the stills from the series shown in this book of the 'mechs in action look hot, hot, hot! My heat sinks are venting as I drool all over them!

FASA has a VERY BIG agenda for BattleTech and I think its wonderful. If it brings in more players to the hobby - hats off to 'em! I just wish that some of the goodies they're bringing out were available in Australia - imagine starting your Saturday with 22 minutes of BattleTech cartoon, then skipping down to your local BattleTech centre to slug it out with your pals in VR, before coming home again to a game it all out on the tabletop. Smokin'!

Maybe I should emigrate to the US. How did you get that green card, Carl? ■

How Banner Train Their Troops

A Very Short Story from Midgard PBM

"Recruit Ballan Bannersbane, perhaps you would be kind enough as to state basic Banner ideology."

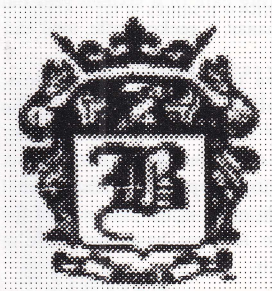
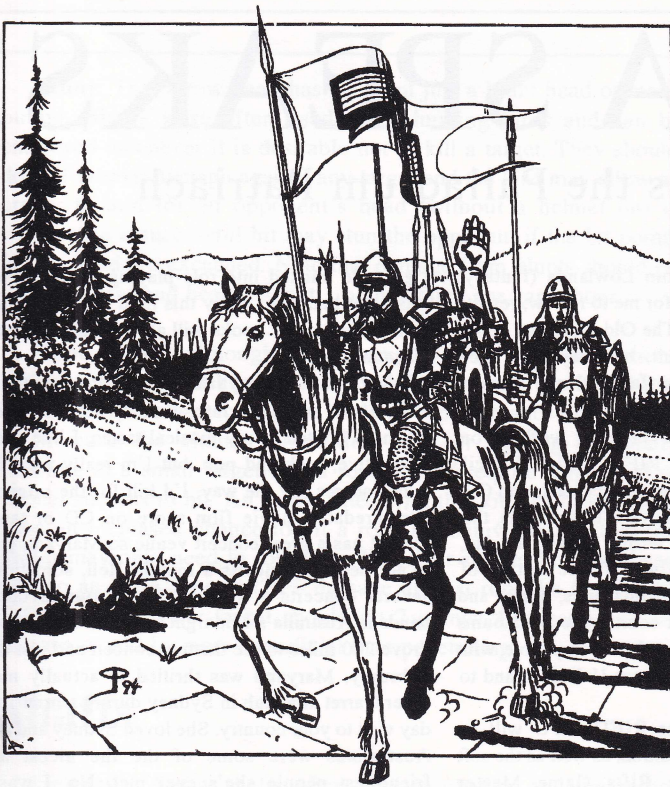
The recruit drew himself stiffly to attention. His braids had been shaved down to a bare fuzz on his scalp.

"SIR! Politically correct BANNER ideology is as follows," Ballan Bannersbane pointed at his fellow boot camp trainees. "If you're smaller than me, then I'm in charge. If you're bigger than me, you're in charge, and if something's gone wrong, he's in charge!"

"Very good" The hot sun glinted from the lens' of follower's round, wire-rimmed spectacles. His ears twitched dangerously. He removed a small note pad from his greatcoat pocket and scribbled a few notes. "You, Owen the Red, name a test to determine whether a recruit is fit to become a Banner retainer."

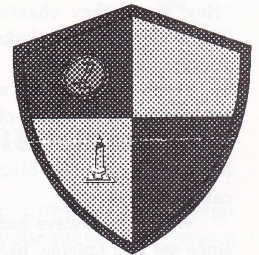
The man scratched his trimmed beard. "The recruit is tied...", Owen hastily corrected himself, "The recruit is volunteers to be tied to a sabre-toothed tiger and shut up in its cave. If the recruit comes out, he's passed. If the tiger comes out, he failed. If the recruit comes out riding the tiger, make him a follower."

"Excellent," the follower's unnatural golden eyes gleamed, "Excellent."



MIDGARD

The Game of Medieval Intrigue, politics, and Hating People from other states



Enthusiasm

That rare commodity that almost never shows its head in anything that Australians do that is not sports related is THE primary reason why Midgard has over 320 positions. No longer are players just little minnows being swept away by the random eddy's of the game. Players push and the game moves. The Two thousand year alliance between the Boda Family and the Ring Religion is almost extinct because the leading Boda player did not like the leading Ring player's attitude. All over the game players are leaving their mark (often in the form of corpses but there is a player run orphanage (please send tax deductible donations to player 3031 ...)) and this has seen players getting INVOLVED, because Midgard has a Human touch to it that is not just the product of a GM but that of the players. Admittedly the human touch has meant a two thousand year alliance has gone down the drain but hey.. that's progress.

The Players

Most Factions now have a core of experienced players that are often enthusiastic enough to run their own newsletter within the faction. Combined with the Midgard Newsletter called 'Tales of Wonder' that runs at about 30 pages, new players never need to be in the dark about what is happening in the world. New players are often started in new areas so the older players, who are always on the lookout for scouting information, would be willing to offer you more than just advice. Midgard is popular because it is full of Enthusiastic players that really MAKE the game

The Baron's Australian Midgard
PO BOX 542
LINDFIELD NSW
2070

Rulebook Set up and 2 free turns for \$15. \$7 per turn with a 2 Week turn around
or ask for a Free copy of the House Magazine

SIEMBIEDA SPEAKS!

Australian Realms Probes the Palladium Patriarch

How did you get started in publishing RPGS?

I had designed my own fantasy game that I played every Saturday night at the Detroit Gaming Centre. It would ultimately turn into my universal game system, but at the time I was just having fun. That campaign ran for two and a half years. Well, my 16 to 24 weekly players kept pestering me about how good it was and how I should submit it for publication to one of the "big" game companies. This was back in 1979 and 1980. I went to virtually everybody in the role-playing industry at that time, but either the company was not interested, or they offered me pocket change for the system. The bet offer I was given was from the now defunct, Judges Guild. They offered me \$500.00 cash and a 2% royalty (and the royalty was to be reduced to 1% after 5000 copies were sold). This was a joke! I came back home and said, "Forget it! I'm not going to give my work away for a song. I'm not going to sell it." And went on playing.

As fate would have it, my pesky friends continued to subliminally implant ideas in my head. "Hey Kev," they chanted several times a week "the heck with those jerks, what don't you publish your game yourself."

They knew I had some limited publishing experience on a couple of different magazines and had self-published several "fanzines" and five issues of a 64 page, black and white comic book called A+Plus.

Well, I've always had the publishing bug, ever since my first fanzine, back in the Eighth Grade. So the next thing I know, I'm starting my own role-playing company with a zillion ideas, a little talent, and 3000 dollars, half of which I had borrowed. I named the company after my fantasy campaign, "The Palladium of Desires." Tons of hard work and the help and encouragement of some good friends, I was able to turn Palladium into one of the top five RPG companies in the world.

What's happening at Palladium right now?

It seems everybody in the United States is jumping on the "collectible card game" bandwagon. That's cool, and Palladium has kicked around a few card ideas itself, but we love "role-playing" games so that's what we'll be focusing on. In fact, we are shooting to release 18 new-roleplaying game books and supplements this year, more than any time in our 14 year history. We plan to offer more support to ALL of our lines especially Rifts, Robotech, Heroes Unlimited, Ninjas & Superspies, and the Palladium Fantasy RPG. We're also doing our best to stay as close to on schedule as possible. With a little luck half the books will be released on time and the other half no more than a few weeks behind schedule. Best of all, I think the quality of these books are better than ever.

Rifts Phase World 2 (sourcebook) and Robotech: New World Order are at the printers now and will be in the stores by the time people read this. I've got the manuscripts for Rifts Japan, Robotech Strike Force, Old Kingdom Mountains

(fantasy) and Old Kingdom Lowlands (fantasy) sitting on my desk waiting for me to review, rewrite and send into production. The Old Kingdom books are late, which is my fault, but they'll be nice additions to the Palladium (fantasy) world when they come out.

Meanwhile, I have Kevin Long working on The Juicer Uprising for RIFTS, Erick Wujcik finishing up the Mystic China Sourcebook, and C.J. Carella working on Nightspawn at this stage is, that it will have a Brom cover, terrific interior art and, what I think is, a unique near future setting of conspiracy, underground organisations, horror and the supernatural. It will, of course, use Palladium's Megaversal game system and be compatible with Beyond the Supernatural, Heroes Unlimited and to some degree Rifts.

As for other stuff, the RIFTS RPG will be available as a hard bound edition, as well as the soft bound edition, and the Rifts Game Master Campaign Manager should be available this summer. The Campaign Manager will include a giant index of data from 10 RIFTS books, a Game Master shield, and other goodies along with a computer program (Windows/IBM) that will enable Game Masters and players to quickly generate scores of different player characters, NPCs, villains, call up magic spells, skills and add your own characters, skills and ideas to the entire mix. It will also offer scenario ideas, random encounters, character sheets and other material. This is our first computer "augmented supplement" (the index, game shield, character sheets and other stuff will be available in printed form too) and we think it will be pretty cool. We're also looking into doing computer games, novels and exploring licensing possibilities.

What interests do you have outside of publishing and games?

I love movies and the theatre. Whenever my wife and I visit New York City we cram in as many plays as possible. Our personal record was nine plays in seven days (including two matinees). As for film, geez, I love all kinds of movies. Spielberg, Lucas, Cameron, Hitchcock, Billy Wilder, John Ford, Kurasawa -- Jurassic Park, E.T., Star Wars, Terminator, The Birds, The Apartment, Red Beard, Seven Samurai, Pulp Fiction; you name 'em, I've seen 'em.

As an artist, I've always been fascinated by animation and collect books and animation artwork from Disney to Japanimation. I enjoy artwork of all kind too, from classic masters to contemporary illustrators, cartoonists and comic book artists.

I have a large collection of art, including several Parkinson paintings, animation cells and drawings, a comic book collection, Star Wars and Robotech toys and far too much junk that I'm too fond of to get rid of. But I really love comics.

As a teenager, I worked toward becoming a comic book artist and writer. I even did some "ghost" inking jobs on a couple of Marvel comics back in the early '80's -- some how, along the way,

I got side tracked into role-playing games, which was great because I enjoy this field even more than comics, but comic books will always have a special place in my heart.

My wife, Maryann (Vice President of Palladium), is heavily into alternative music. I'm a bit more limited in my musical tastes. I like some alternative, rock and pop, but I'm really into film music scores (by the way, I'd kill for the original, first Predator movie film score on CD or tape). Detroit has a great concert venue so Maryann goes to see several concerts a month. Hell, sometimes several concerts a week! One of our favourite bands is Australia's Midnight Oil. Last summer we drove 200 miles to see them in concert and just this February, Maryann was thrilled to actually meet Peter Garret at a club in Sydney during a brief four day visit to your country. She loved Sydney and said Australians were some of the the nicest and friendliest people she's ever met. No, I wasn't there. I was stuck at home working on a couple of different books, shovelling snow, enduring sub-zero temperatures and taking care of a sixteen year old son, the dog, two Iguanas, a gecko, turtle, toad and rabbit.

Of course I love to read, especially books about myths, legends, gods, dinosaurs, the paranormal, history of all kind, and animals. Unfortunately, I just can't find the time to read as much as I'd like too, especially recreational reading of fiction. Oh, my son, me and most of the Palladium staff like to play basketball. We're terrible but we enjoy it.

Your games show a lot of influence from by comic and animation. Tell us about that.

As I mentioned, I've always loved comic books. I've been drawing as far back as I can remember and my mother had instilled me with a great love for books. When I discovered comic books around age six, it was the ultimate blending of the two, art and words to tell a story. At age nine, I announced to my parents that when I grew up I was going to be a comic book artist and worked toward that goal for the next 14 years. I was lucky, because during my teenage years Detroit was a hub for comic conventions and a ton of comic book artists came out of the Detroit area. In fact the joke at Marvel Comic in the 70's was that all the new artists came from Detroit, got work in New York and moved to California. Consequently, I rubbed shoulders with such Detroit brewed talent as Terry Austin, Jim Starlin, Richard Buckler, Arvell Jones, Keith Pollard, Mike Gustovich, Mike Vosburg, and Tom Orzechowski, among others, and have met dozens of others.

The comic book approach to adventure, pacing, story telling, and dynamic artwork has had a huge impact on my life and my work in role-playing. I guess because I'm attracted to comic book action and dynamic art I find myself working with a lot of artists in the comic book industry or people who have also been heavily influenced by comic books. This includes Kevin Long, Vince

Martin, Wayne Breau, Roger Petersen and folks like Jim Steranko, Richard Corben, Tim Truman, Flint Henry, Mike Gustovich and others.

Animation has always been like magic to me. I was mesmerised by my first cartoon and was hooked ever since. Like so much in my life, I have very broad tastes in animation and love almost every type and approach to the art of animation and love almost every type and approach to the art of animation. I've studied the artwork, the pencil drawings, cells and techniques, fooled around with animation in college, and collect original animation art and books. Again, the dynamic approach to story telling, powerful artwork and stron characters seen in animation is reflected in my writing and the artwork in Palladium's products.

Japanese animation, starting with shows like Mobile Suit Gungam and Macross, and continuing with animation like Akira, Bubblegum Crisis, Macross Plus, Macross Seven and other shows, have brought to life bold, high tech science fiction. Their robot and spaceship designs are fantastic and some of the combat scenes are epic. Talk about exciting and inspirational. Great Stuff! How can you not like it? Of course, some of the stories are weak and even silly, but , man, is the designs and combat sequences are phenomenal.

Where is Palladium heading?

Up and forward I hope. We expect 1995 to be our biggest year in the history of the company. Although the focus is producing quality role-playing games, we're exploring possibilities in the area of computers, novels and licensing of Rifts and other Palladium games. I think all three are inevitable. However, no matter how fun other games and recreations can be, there is nothing quite like role-playing, so you won't see us moving too far away from what we love to do. Personally, I think all of us at Palladium continue to get better, so the writing, art and packaging of our books continue to improve. I think you can expect Palladium to produce even better stuff in the future and hopefully some interesting innovations too.

Where do you think the RPG industry is heading?

I think we're going to see a great deal of change over the next three to five years. You're going to see role-playing become more mainstream as films and other media are going to draw on role-playing games just like they are currently doing with comic books. I also think you're going to see a number of big players (and I mean big) from other industries getting into the role-playing market. That's going to mean dramatic changes, particularly in the area of packaging and marketing. Competition is going to be fierce, and I fear a lot of small or struggling publishers may go out of the business, but I think the companies that survive and those with fresh ideas and high quality product are going to rocket to new heights. Of course I hope Palladium Books will be one of those rocketing companies.

What effects are collectible trading card games having?

Well, card games like Magic: The Gathering have certainly created quite a stir. A lot of people think they are the next super-hot thing in gaming. Some have even speculated that collectible card

games will spell the demise of role-playing. They point to scores of tiny new companies struggling to stay in business, and even some larger, marginal companies taking a big hit in sales. That may be true, but I also know that Palladium Books hasn't been hurt at all. New Palladium products sell as well or better than ever, and our older products continue to have strong sales too. And we're not the only company doing well with role-playing during this cardmania. Like I said earlier, role-playing is a truly unique experience. There's just nothing like it and its here to stay. That's not to take anything away from the card market, but role-playing is just too cool and too much fun to fade away into oblivion as some card fanatics would suggest. I just don't see this happening.

In fact, I believe that the collectible card game is going to be one of the things that helps to push role-playing into the mainstream. Palladium has already had a few card dsitributors who never carried role-playing before, contact us about adding our role-playing games to their product line. The card games have also attracted a huge younger audience of kids 8 to 12 years old. Kids who normally don't play role-playing games. We've seen a number of those young "card gamers" begin to ask about role-playing. I think as these kids get older and the card craze cools downin a few years, that a lot of them are going to take a good look at role-playing games. In the long run, I think the card phenomenon is going to be great for the role-playing industry.

What do you think of the current trend to more literary forms for role-playing - eg story-telling and drama?

I think it's great and long overdue. For a long time, Palladium was one of the few companies to emphasize story-telling, character development and "role-playing". I never understood the emphasis on rules, charts and tables rather than the building of an exciting story. The name of the game is "role" playing not "rules" playing. I guess it took a decade for role-playing games to really begin to shed its ties to war-gaming. I think...I hope the trend to create interesting worlds and characters that enable the players to spin epic stories continue.

You are strong on protecting Palladium's and your own intellectual properties. What do you consider the main threats to these properties?

Ignorance. I'm constantly amazed at how little people know or understand about copyrights and trademarks. Even other artists, writers and publishers often have a twisted, incorrect or incomplete understanding about intellectual properties. I think a great deal of my fervour regarding intellectual rights comes from my involvement in comics during the 70s and 80s when creators got tired of having the shaft and were finally ready to stand up for their rights.

Just about any artist who's been around for a while can tell you horror stories about unscrupulous clients and publishers who have ripped them off or tried to rip them off. I think being a creator/artist/writer and having suffered many injustices when I was young, inexperienced, or too poor to fight back, gives me a unique perspective about creator's rights, copyrights and royalties. I see things from an artists/creator's point of view. I studied the law to protect myself and I swore when

I started my own company that I would never abuse fellow creators and that I would champion creator rights, and I have.

What do you know about Australia? Is there a Rifts sourcebook planned for Australia?

A lot and yes. Australia is a fascinating country with truly unique animals, environments, myths and history. Reading about Australia has been one of my and Erick Wujcik's favourite pastimes. My wife visited your country briefly just this February and she plans on bringing me over sometime in the next couple of years. A trip I eagerly anticipate.

As for a Rifts sourcebook, I wnat Rifts Australia to be unique and dynamic. We've received at least half a dozen submissions over the last few years, but I thought the ideas were flat and cliché, not fresh and exciting so I rejected them. We even had two Australian writers enquire about doing the book, but they never submitted a finished manuscript. I'd love to write the book, along with a hundred others, but my problem is finding the time - there atre so many books I wnat to write, but not enough time to do them and run the business at the same time. I'd imagine you can expect to see Rifts Australia in the next two or three years. That's the best I can do.

Are there plans to do novels?

Yes. We have a collection of short stories and two finished novels collecting dust on the shelf. It's really a matter of finding the time to finish them up right and get them published. We hope the first novel will be out later this year.

How do writers/artists get hired by Palladium?

Bribery never hurts. Seriously, it really depends on the person's level of skill, ability, cooperative spirits and Palladium's needs. We're always looking for hot new talent. However, our standards are high and even 18 products a year is not enough to provide regular work for more than a couple dozen people. We get hundreds of submissions a year. Most show talent but aren't at a professional level yet. The best advice I can give young artists and writers is, if this is what you really want to do, don't give up, keep at it, look at your work with a critical eye, strive to improve and try to accept constructive criticism. But mainly work, work, work. The only way to improve is to constantly work at it.

Writers can send Palladium a query letter and we'll send them an Unsolicited Manuscript release form and submission guidelines. After they get the form and guidelines, they can submit a manuscript. Unfortunately, a manuscript may sit in our submissions pile for months, so be patient.

Artists can submit photocopies of their best work to us, "attention art director." Never send original artwork or expensive copies. That's all there is to it.

Kevin, thanks for talking to us. Have a coldie!

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Roleplaying is essentially communication. It is the creation of alternate personae and worlds, and the manipulation of those creations through imagination. But without the printed word our genre would be only mind-games. Print provides a structure, a pathway for the players and GM to follow. It provides continuity - a permanence that modern memory could not sustain unaided. A printed scenario contains an aura of authority - it is the 'official' version of the game-world, it is 'The Word'.

Communication began with sound and sign, evolved into language, and then was translated into symbols that became alphabets, which in turn could be written down on various materials. During the Middle ages writing became the monopoly of the Church. Communication was restricted to an elite, and society stagnated. New ideas from the East sparked a Renaissance in learning. The velocity of communication increased rapidly, but was limited by speed with which books could be copied by hand. Only with the invention of the printing process could the vital imagination of man reach its full potential.

THE WORD

THE IMPACT OF PRINTING

By Brad Martin

Palaeolithic man used ochre to paint scenes on the walls of his caves. This was not just interior decorating, but the representation of animals and human beings being hunted or hunting. By painting symbols on a stone man left a permanent record of his activities for others to admire and to learn from. No longer would the human story be solely dependent on fallible oral or signed communication and memory.

Over thousands of years pictographic records evolved (in tandem with spoken language) into at first ideography (the use of symbols to represent words or phrases), and then to phonetic writing using an alphabet. This process was largely the result of the emergence of settled society from a nomadic hunter-gatherer society. More complicated activities associated with agriculture and urbanisation required a more sophisticated method of record-keeping.

The sounds of a spoken language (vowels and consonants) were separated and assigned to a specific sign or letter. The letters were arranged in a definite order to form an alphabet. The oldest alphabets were the cuneiform in Mesopotamia and the Egyptian hieroglyphs. At first the new alphabets were restricted to being used on stone and clay tablets, and were thus largely the preserve of the governments of wealthy societies. Writing only became relatively common with the development of a cheaper, more easily worked, and more portable material on which to write.

By the end of the 6th century the Chinese had produced the first printed works. The text to be printed was written in ink on a sheet of paper, then that side of the paper was applied to the surface of a block of wood coated with a rice paste. The paste retained the ink. An engraver then cut away the uninked areas. To make a print, the wood block was inked and a sheet of paper was then pressed to it. The text would then be transferred to the paper. By the 11th century the Chinese had invented movable type. The clay characters were placed on an iron plate which was coated with resin, wax, and paper ash. Allowed to cool, the type was set and could be used for printing. The type could be moved by reheating the plate. The Chinese had thus invented printing, but what prevented them from exploiting this was that the ideogram-based Chinese writing had over 60,000 characters!

The art of paper-making slowly percolated through the caravan routes of central Asia, reaching Italy by the late 13th century. It met great resistance from the dominant guardians of the written word - the scribes of the monasteries and their religious and aristocratic masters. The copying of holy manuscripts onto parchment by hand was regarded as an act of obedience and penitence. The aristocrats wanted writing confined to the monasteries under their control (which were the only institutions with the resources to harvest the stock of hides necessary to meet the parchment requirements), not available to anyone who could pulp rags to make paper. In 1221 Emperor Frederick II decreed that documents written on paper had no validity in law.

It appears that the wood-block printing techniques did not transfer from China. It arose spontaneously in western Europe in the late 14th century following the introduction of paper, and was mostly used for producing religious illustrations. A Dutchman cut the letters of the roman alphabet from wood, and experimented with them in composing text. But they were delicate and wore out quickly. Following up on this work, master die-cutters experimented with brass or bronze dies each bearing a letter of the alphabet, that were struck on a matrix of clay or lead to make a mould, which then had lead poured over it to make a plate which would then bear the text in relief. But there were problems with getting a consistent product, for each strike of a letter produced a slightly different impression on the mould.

GUTENBERG

Johann Gensfleisch zur Laden [known as Gutenberg, after the name of his family's house] is generally credited with bringing to fruition these earlier experiments. The son of a goldsmith, he was exiled from his native Mainz and settled in the German city of Strasbourg. With two partners he extended the work of the die-cutters by carving the letters from bronze to make a mould in which an alloy of lead, tin, and antimony was poured. From his knowledge of textile printing and book-binding he developed a simple wooden press. The type pieces were composed letter by

letter and locked into a metal frame. It was then inked and covered with a sheet of paper to be printed. This was then placed between the two surfaces of the press, and the screw tightened. The process gave a sharp impression and allowed both sides of a page to be printed. After printing, the type could be removed and returned to the compartments of the typeset, ready for reuse.

Gutenberg's inventions do not explain the revolutionary impact printing had on the world. His machine could have joined the myriad of others that gathered dust in basements. The time had to be right to welcome this new technology. Europe was at the right time. It was at a time of transition - from the medieval world to the Renaissance; from a society governed by the three orders to one governed by the state; from a feudal economy to a mercantile one; from one universal church to the Reformation. The Turks had captured Byzantium in 1453 and were overrunning the Balkans. France was in the final stages of the Hundred Years War with England. Christian Spain was still in the midst of her Reconquista. The Conciliar Movement was challenging the authority of the popes over the control of the Church, and confining the Papacy's temporal authority to the Italian peninsula. The Hussites rejected the orthodox religious dogmas and presented an alternative, communistic, way of life. Rulers had founded universities to educate royal officials which then created bureaucracies that challenged the authority of the aristocracy.

Merchants began looking beyond the walls of their town, encouraged by government centralisation of money production, the reduction of internal trade barriers, and improved communications. All this meant that the old certainties were dead.

An increasingly complex society encouraged a greater level of literacy. In the growing towns such as London and Florence, the level of literacy was

between 60 and 80 percent, but in the countryside it was barely 1%. The educated, urban laymen of western Europe, alienated by the decadence and corruption of the Church during the Great Schism (1378-1415), were seeking a return to the apostolic life. They sought perfection through voluntary poverty, disdaining the ceremony, sacraments, wealth and authority of the established Church. The monasteries found their social and economic support falling away. Fewer people were willing to bind themselves to institutions associated with the discredited secular Church. If individual fulfilment was possible by a devout meditation on the human life and passion of Christ, what was the need of the strict rules and obscure learning of the monasteries?

The first type-printed documents appeared in 1454. They were Indulgences printed in Mainz, with blank spaces left for the donor's name, and the date. As well as revenue raising devices the Church encouraged the printing of religious works, especially the Bible. It is estimated that about 20 million books were printed before 1500 A.D. 77% of these were in Latin and 45% were religious works. The Church seized on printing because it gave it, for the first time, the

power to insist on the uniformity of worship. Liturgical manuscripts, hand-written by monks, had invariably admitted local deviations. Printed books were uniformly faithful to the original text, thus enabling priests in all localities to read the same source and to follow a standardised ceremony. As the religious works were printed in Latin, the Church was able to insist that all priests understood that language. This separated them from their flocks reducing the chance that they would spread heresies. Knowledge of Latin also ensured that priests were able to accurate parish records, and had no excuse for not following the various instructions of the popes and councils. Printing thus served as a technology of control by standardising and centralising the flow of information from the top of a hierarchy downwards.

At a time of crisis, Church officials hailed printing as a providential invention which proved the superiority of Christendom over the infidel. But within decades they would be declaiming printing as the spreader of heresy. On 31 October 1517 the German monk, Martin Luther, posted his *Ninety-Five Theses* on the Castle church door at Wittenberg. They criticised the abuse

of Indulgences, and were written in Latin. The intention was merely to spark debate amongst clerics and scholars. But the theses were soon translated into German, printed and widely distributed. The debate expanded far beyond what Luther had intended. From a specific criticism of one abuse, radicals transformed the debate into a general criticism of the Roman Church. Germany was soon full of printed anti-papist broadsides and caricatures. Thus from the beginning was the propaganda value of printing recognised.

This could not have happened had the monks still had a monopoly on the making of books. What stopped printing from being a monopoly of the Church, was the fact that the printers



Indulgences

In Roman Catholicism, a sin is always evil. God's charity and justice demands that the sinner must pay for his crime. The punishment had to be satisfied in this life or in purgatory. In life, the punishment could be satisfied by good (indulged) works (prayers, alms-giving or fasting). From the 14th century church-appointed *quaestors* roamed from town to town popularising these indulgenced works, particularly alms-giving. The selling of indulgences quickly became a major source of revenue for the Church. The many financial abuses resulted in Indulgences being criticised as blatant commercialism. Indulgences became symptomatic of the corruption and decadence of the Catholic Church.

The Peasants' War

A segment of the peasantry and the smaller craftsmen of the rural towns were economically rising, and sought an equal political status. Luther's supporters had covered Germany with posters and pamphlets denouncing the Church for being a human construction, alien to the word of God. Inspired by this the rebel leaders equated the aristocracy with the clerics, and demanded the restoration of the rights of the commons. They aimed to remove all intermediate levels of government - the aristocracy and the princes - leaving only the emperor and the pope. Luther's message was extended from just religious freedom, to economic and social freedom.

The uprising began in the Black Forest in 1524, but quickly spread to central and northern Germany. In the city of Memmingen the rebels drew up *The Twelve Articles*. These called for the right of each community to choose its own pastor; a just tithe; the abolition of serfdom; the return of customary hunting and fishing rights; the abolition of new burdens and taxes imposed by the lords. The list was printed and circulated widely, going through 20 editions in two months.

As the resistance of the lords and princes intensified, the more radical rebels extended their demands. They printed pamphlets stating that all Christians had the duty to disobey and oppose godless tyrants. They also appealed to the "common man" in the cities - the burghers, guildsmen and miners - to join them and reassert their traditional freedoms and rights. A one-time supporter of Luther, Thomas Muntzer, emerged as the peasants' leader. He formed them into Covenanted Bands and called his followers, the Elect. His writings called for revolution: "The time is at hand - a great bloodshed will come upon the hardened world on account of their unfaith. God will not abandon his Elect...".

Monasteries and manors were burnt. Clerics and knights murdered. The lords could not allow the status quo to be overturned. They gathered an army of professional mercenaries and defeated the ill-equipped peasant army at Frankenhausen. From 70 - 100,000 peasants were killed.

were independent merchants. What they printed was largely determined by the profitability of doing so. Gutenberg had gone heavily into debt to finance his experiments and recouped his expenses by producing lavish Bibles for wealthy clerics and patricians. But this market was small, and as the number of presses grew (about 200 in western Europe by 1500 A.D.), the new printers had to develop new markets if they were to stay in business. Apart from clerics and scholars, the only sector of society which was sufficiently literate to serve as a market was the urban population - the apprentices, students, skilled artisans, housewives, merchants, shopkeepers, officials, and lawyers. Most importantly, they wanted to read books printed in the vernacular, not Latin. As the type used in the printing process was made of metal, this tended to cause spelling to become fixed. Vernacular grammar and vocabulary became standardised, undermining the value of Latin as a standard language. This process was encouraged by the kings, who were trying to establish territorial states, and needed to establish an official national language so as to distinguish their state from all the others. In 1539 the Ordonnance of Villers-Citterets made French the official language of the Courts of Justice. The printers' desire for a larger market therefore resulted in vernacular languages supplanting Latin. In a very basic way printing was responsible for improving communication between major sectors of the populace.

The literate towns-people wanted devotional works, elementary textbooks, grammars, manuals on household management, mystical works, treatises on astrology and nature, books on morals

and manners, on poetry and classical literature. The printers also found that they had an insatiable appetite for history - the legends of Troy and ancient Rome, the chivalric romances, and the national epics such as King Arthur, and Roland. The spread of books on these subjects set down common ways and thinking about and doing things. It created a pattern of life in relation to the community and environment - a collective morality. This commonality of behaviour was fostered by state and religious authorities through the education system. The Protestants made reading a compulsory part of education. The state ensured that what was read at the schools supported the national myth. What children were taught was meant to bind them to the existing community. Printing was thus vital in the establishment of national cultures.

Printing in the vernacular immediately made the Bible accessible to everyone who could read (printed woodcut illustrations were vital in reaching those who could not). The teaching of Duns Scotus and William of Ockham said that words - divine promises - were the essential link between the soul and God in salvation. Thus the quality of a man's soul or the doing of good works counted for nothing, as did the ceremonies and sacraments of the Church. The traditional institutions ceased to be the essential link between man and God. The Scriptures contained the divine promises of God and therefore the only path to salvation was through their study.

Martin Luther, through his preachings and writings, popularised this message. Man could attain salvation by abandoning oneself to the gospel - to the Word. The papacy was a human construction, not divinely ordained. By saying that man could be saved by faith alone, Luther rendered the whole apparatus of the Church superfluous. Instead of a Catholic priesthood, Luther created a "priesthood of all believers" - all Christians were priests to their neighbours. Luther published at the rate of a piece (a book, pamphlet, sermon, or letter) a fortnight. This prodigious output overwhelmed his opponents. Printing ensured that the ideas of Luther became a permanent part of the corpus of knowledge, and irrevocably altered the way European man understood his religion.

Established authorities have always attempted to prohibit and suppress new or heretical ideas and movements. Ch'in Shih Huang Ti's famous Burning of the Books of 213 B.C. in China, accompanied by the execution of 500 scholars, and the Nazis burning of Jewish books, demonstrate this. The advent of printing increased the velocity of the spread of ideas, necessitating authorities to become more vigilant. Pope Innocent VIII decreed that all books be submitted for examination and permission before being issued for general reading. In every town Emperor Charles V's heralds stuck up printed posters commanding that Luther's books should be burned. In 1529 Pope Leo X anathematised the doctrines and books of Luther. The Sacred Congregation of the Roman Inquisition drew up a list of books which were deemed to be theologically erroneous or immoral. This list developed into the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* ("Index of Forbidden Books") which went through 20 editions until its suppression in 1966. The Protestant authorities followed suit, censoring pro-Catholic books. People were forced to choose what side they were on, there was no room for a third way (as the Anabaptists found out). Whilst printing can be said to have increased the rights of the individual in relation to free speech and thought, it was also used by state and religious authorities, as an agency of thought control.

The introduction of printing into a fantasy role-playing world would have a profound impact. The price of all written matter would fall substantially, and knowledge would become available to a much wider audience. Manuals on science, medicine, and nature would make learning easier, and help characters gain herbal healing skills. Treatises on alchemy and chemistry would make the preparation of potions easier. Books on the martial arts, siege warfare, and tactics would enable PCs to quickly acquire these skills. Printed maps would encourage travel, opening up new horizons for characters to explore.

Scenario Hooks

The Specialist: In the aftermath of a great battle against a horde of horse nomads, the PCs discover several smooth sheets of papyrus-like material on which are regular, clearly defined, inked writing. The language is unknown, but the writing is finer than any that could be made by hand. This may indicate that the sheets are magical. If the characters interrogate the prisoners one man steps forward and with a few guttural words of Common claims that the papers are his. The man is a master-printer, and desperate to stay alive. His portable printing press is with the retreating army, but he has the skill to construct another, if given the right materials.

The Peasants' War: The kingdom has been thrown into chaos. Bands of peasants, armed with pitchforks and sickles, are roaming the countryside. Anyone they meet are challenged as to whether or not they believe that the rights of the "common man" should be restored. Those answering in the negative are robbed and murdered. The PCs are taken to one of the rebel leaders in a small town. Thomas Grebel is an ex-monk who believes that the Day of Judgement is approaching. The Chosen People must be alerted and be made ready to strike down the godless. He has printed off thousands of posters proclaiming this message, and wants them distributed throughout the country. He gives the PCs a list of contacts in all the nearby towns. Successful completion of the task will ensure that the characters are elected into the Chosen Ones.

The Heretic: The PCs have been involved in the smuggling of contraband between two neighbouring kingdoms. After arriving in town they unload their six mules and store the goods in their warehouse. Rooms in a fine inn are rented and the night is spent dreaming of the fat profits to be made at the morrow's market. After breakfast the characters leave the inn to fetch their goods. They notice that a vast pile of faggots has been assembled in the middle of the plaza. As most the townsfolk look like they are waiting for the show to commence, the characters will decide to wait and see what happens. The black-robed Inquisitors lead out a half-naked man. He has been terribly tortured, and is minus his eyes and ears. One of the characters may recognise him. He is the printer - Aaron van Stalvert. Alarm spreads among the PCs when they realise they have a case of Aaron's books in their warehouse!

Magic Unlimited: The sorcerer Torvald Magnusson, has always been overshadowed by his more erudite colleagues. Now he has obtained one of the new printing presses. He hopes to be able to churn out vast numbers of leaflets bearing the most utilitarian spells, thus cornering the domestic spell market. The only problem is, that he doesn't know how to operate the press. He has heard how the PCs are good with their hands, and offers them a cut of the action. If the PCs are successful the market will soon be flooded with cheap spells. The Magician's Guild will not be happy!

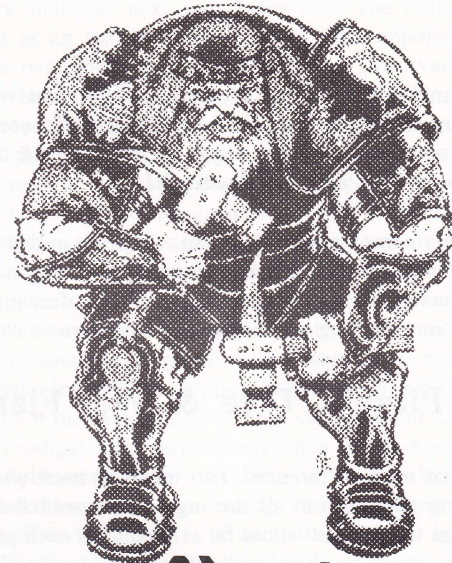
'Back to the Sources'. Arnaldo Ferrari, the Count D'Urbino, is renown as a book collector. It is said that he has a first edition copy of everything, back to Noah's catalogue of all the animals loaded onto his ark. The characters are contacted and "invited" to an audience. The Count has heard that some goldsmith in a northern town has made a Bible, using some new process which guarantees perfect reproduction. The count must have this book, and promises a substantial reward for its safe delivery.

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Blood Pit

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Nord

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Weapons: Two Warhammers

Fighting Style: Wall of Steel

Quote: Your bones shatter like ice!

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A Brand New Day

Adding New Life To Your Old Campaign

By Colin Taber

Gaming is fun, that's why we do it, but we've all found ourselves stuck in a campaign that didn't seem to be going anywhere, one that was a chore to attend. Such campaigns most often die a slow, agonised death... RIP.

Other campaigns have got so much **life** in them that you could nearly believe in that other exciting world being a real place. You find yourself constantly thinking about it, drawing a smile, your anticipation building as Sunday afternoon draws closer...

Pizza's, Dice & Wet Flannels

What's the difference? Too many to mention. This article is not going to point out all the ingredients needed for a successful campaign (such a list would be as unique as each group campaign), but I am going to share some ideas that can easily make a dead campaign come back to life. Such ideas are not for the overworked referee (well, not alone), but for the players. This 'How to' article is (I hope) useful to all of us, but I suppose is aimed particularly at those of you who sit around the table twiddling your thumbs, speculating about when the pizza will arrive, hurling dice and wondering why your referee shows the imagination of a wet flannel. That's right, the terminally bored player - a role we have all filled at one time or another.

Out With the Old

For a slice of society that is suppose to be more creative and intelligent than the rest of the cake I can only despair when I see some groups. What do I mean? A group of six people, five facing off one. Hang on, this isn't a competition, or is it?

I wouldn't be the only referee in the world who has felt that rolling up to a gaming session seemed like turning up to a fixture in a league. A game in which the rest of my team didn't show, leaving me to battle it out with five opponents. Opponents?

We all know role playing shouldn't be a competition, but how many of us (and our group fellows) apply that? In too many groups the referee puts on a brave face, raises his defences (his referee's screen) and prepares for battle. I'm telling you, it may not seem like it at a glance, but if you looked at the direction and progress of many campaigns its nothing short of siege warfare.

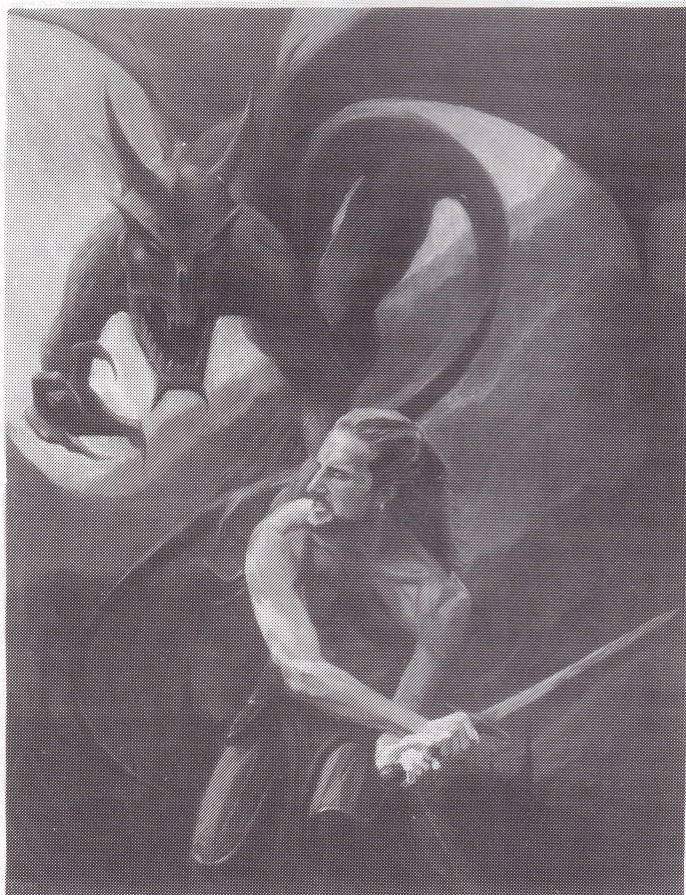
Okay, I'm rambling a little, but what I'm getting to is that none of this has anything to do with role-playing, maybe its part of rule playing or table top gaming, but not role playing. One side might be enjoying themselves, but in a competitive game, the loser won't be.

Has it always been this way? Well for many groups yes. Generally its a result of many things, the most common elements are referee laziness (lack of preparation), a lack of player interaction and counter productive attitudes. Brace yourselves guys, this is where you are about to do some work...

And in With the New (1)

I've refereed for years, and I suppose consider myself fairly capable and also quite experienced. I've no doubt been guilty of all the errors or failings I've mentioned, hey - nobody's perfect. But, what I discovered years ago was that the way I was taught to referee is inherently flawed. I shouldn't sit there behind a screen telling players every single detail of their lives, it's their life, I've only got a partial say in what happens! The quickest path to a successful game is a team effort, the players have to direct things as much as I, the referee direct them. Sure, I know what's happening on the world stage, or how NPC's react or what knowledge they hold, but each player must realise that they hold within themselves as much background and campaign ideas as I do. Its rude not to share.

For every PC there is a character background. Such a background will take in at the very least NPCs (relatives, friends and mentors), a home district (whether a farm, village or a city) and a history (the character did have a life before now, and surely he didn't just milk the cows everyday). This is something the player can think about. Let your referee sit down and take it easy, make him a cup of tea, then think about this; Who are you? Where are you from? What has happened in your past, and your families?



You don't need to go for epic stories of being an orphaned prince secreted away by monks, you just need to think about your roots, flesh it out. Even the most bland backgrounds can be the nest of the best campaigns, such campaigns can be the focus of your group or just a meandering but strong sub-plot that wanders through the main storyline of the campaign.

Yes, your referee should be in the position to give a nod to your ideas and background, but if you are being realistic about things, and not going for gold then why should they complain. After all you've just saved them some work.

Some of you are sitting there thinking "I've already got a background for my Bodyguard. This Taber guy's one picket short of a fence!", hey and maybe I am. But have you got a well detailed background? Something that's usable, not just decoration, and most importantly how often does it come into play. I've seen dozens of people detail page after page of background on their beloved characters, but I've only ever seen two or three ever use it!

Tell me, when was the last time your character visited his mother?

And in With the New (2)

Okay, so you're thinking about background. And don't stop with character background, think about where you grew up. Do you have an old relative back in the old village you send money to? Who taught you your skills? Is there perhaps some threat at home, some dark secret, a mysterious wood. Hell! Think about the very building you grew up, think about how it shaped you. That's your past, and once you've detailed it (I'm not talking about ten thousand words, a couple of hundred would do) you know who your character really is. This brings us to the present day, and your future...

People don't just live, there's a point to it. Whether you're trying to feed your children, pay the mortgage or protect loved ones from orcan raiders it doesn't matter, all of these things translate into goals. The big question is; What's yours?

Maybe if your character grew up in a backwater enduring hardships and poverty he or she dreams of making a fortune and going for the soft life, perhaps they just want a pile of gold, a town house in the capital and then what fate brings. Such a goal may seem lofty, comfy and to some possibly even anti-climatic, but to someone who has spent their lives avoiding the pox, mucking out stables and being flogged by her betters, it sounds like a good deal. Sure your character is your alter ego and you want them to do exciting things in their world that you can't do in this one, but why forbid them a cushy retirement? Now, that's satisfaction.

What other kinds of goals might be in the offing? Whatever you like (or more importantly, whatever you think your character would like). A mage might want to retire to a life of research in a secluded tower in the wilds, a priest might find the appeal of a quiet monastery suitable after years of preaching and travel, an elf might wish to return to his beloved woods, a dwarf to mountain holds. I'm not suggesting players should just think of characters in terms of how they are planning on retiring, some may wish to achieve certain goals before 'the easy life'. One player might want to lead a government sponsored expedition to discover new lands, others may want to try their hands at trade or politics. Any goal of these magnitudes need player attention and interaction, they can't work with the referee pushing players down a linear and well defined path.

Such consideration of what the future may hold, and what goals can be aimed for will give the character depth and more importantly direction. Such goals and the resultant drive of the players can only enhance the campaign, adding to its momentum.

Setting a goal can be a hard decision, working towards it can be very satisfying, achieving it can be wonderful. That's great, now your character has a background, goals, motivation and most likely a more full personality as a byproduct of these factors. The best byproduct of these things though is that you, without even noticing it have started driving the campaign. Your referee is no longer preparing an endless list of encounters and situations for you and your fellows to blunder through. Instead you are choosing the path you want to walk, and the referee is following, at times the path veers in unexpected directions. Like life sometimes there is a fork, and a choice must be made. This is a place of crossing storylines, a place where you and your referee will look at each other and smile, knowing that both storylines have now become one greater one. This adds depth to a campaign, and with the hooks of your character's past, present, background, the world and the referee's NPC's, campaign line, and subplots you will be getting snagged like a beast in a bramble.

A Team Effort

If players are prepared to do just a fraction of the preparation work that they expect their referee to do, the campaign can be nothing short of busy and lively. If the group works to put all this together in a balanced way (with the players sub-plots and storylines acting as fillers or 'local' background to the referee's campaign storyline) than it can be nothing more than a memorable and highly enjoyable game.

The only point to remember here when mixing these differing backgrounds is that the balance of the overall (combined) storyline is the most important element. If a decision needs to be made on any contradiction or priority it is one that the referee is most likely to make (as they know the full campaign storyline). On most occasions such plots may meet and mix, but neither need be changed or chosen between as they will not contradict.

Part of the team work is co-existence. The characters being played as designed, the referee's storylines unfolding as he has planned, and the players background plots, along with the sub-plots of the referee mixing into a pleasing whole. For this to work every player must get involved, developing background and 'personal' plots as discussed above. If a player is going to do this, there is only one rule for them to follow; do it for the good of the group and game, not self gratification.

What this is all about is sharing creation, and control. It is about playing on the same side, not against each other. A team effort.

Ownership

Suddenly that dead, quiet campaign has faded away, it has been swamped by that busy, intricate new one. Not the referees adventure, but the group's. One in which the characters truly live, and one that the players have more control over. The characters now have a past, present, and most importantly their eyes on the future. A brand new day beckons.

Let the games begin!

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THE OGRES WAGE WAR IN THE REALMS CAMPAIGN WORLD OF UNAE



ADVENTURE OUTLINE

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Pushed deep into the mountains that border the spreading human settlements across Dormetia, they've found even these remote areas are now being explored and settled by Heletians, Burvois and others greedy for land. A major ogre offensive is about to get underway, and the players are going to be landed in the thick of it, as a number of cities, including Vangre, are attacked by ogre armies.

Recently, a new leader has arisen among the ranks of the ogres, one with a keen military mind and the personal strength of will and body to back up his grand plans. Having fought his way through a series of personal challenges, he is *Ta Aknad Kurger*, supreme Kurger of the Dormetian ogres.

The ogres, under their charismatic new leader, are convinced that a number of strong offensive blows will halt the advancing humans. Ogre armies have moved into position near Pont De Fasselle in Burvoy, Portre in the Kramer Confederation and Argentia in Greater Baimiopia. The largest force, however, is in the Ogro Arbaro forest, north of Vangre. Again, war is to come to Dormetia.

This mini-campaign is so large, and its long-term ramifications so exciting, that one issue just isn't going to be enough space to cover the whole event, so we are going to be presenting this adventure over two issues. For those referees who just can't wait to get into the storyline, enough hooks are presented in this first instalment to keep your players fully occupied until the second instalment comes out in two months time.

SOURCE MATERIAL

This scenario concerns the siege of Vangre, a city of considerable size and population. Referees who wish to do a bit of background preparation on sieges and the effects such events can have on local populations have a number of sources to draw upon, both fact and fantasy. A number of fantasy novels feature sieges - the siege of Minas Tirith in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, and Chyrellos in David Eddings' *The Sapphire Rose*. Also look for historical texts that cover the siege of Malta in 1565, any of the sieges of Jerusalem during the Crusades, or the siege of Vienna by the Ottoman Turks (which inspired a series of short stories by Robert E. Howard, and Tim Powers' utterly brilliant novel, *The Drawing of the Dark*). For an excellent video reference, you should watch Terry Gilliam's *The Adventures of Baron Munchhausen*. Try not to concentrate too much on the military aspects of sieges when you conduct your research, rather be sure to look at the many fascinating human interest stories these events led to, as it is at this level that your players are most likely to be affected.

The sun rises over the treetops of the Ogro Abaro, the huge forest to the north of Vangre. The air beneath the thick canopy of leaves is still and damp. A tranquil quiet holds the wood, reluctant to let go.

An owl, finished with its nocturnal feasting, wings its way back to its nest, high in the trunk of a towering elm tree. It settles into its hollow, fluffing its feathers to keep itself warm. It dozes only briefly however, awakened suddenly by the crunch of boots on fallen branches and twigs. Harsh, gruff voices sound. The owl will get little sleep this morning, as this is only the first of ten thousand pairs of feet that will make their way along the forest trail.

An army is on the move.

Thus begins the first exciting episode of a sweeping two-part mini-campaign set in Unae by Lee Sheppard, Colin Taber and Adam Whitt.

This adventure is presented in the Realms' proven format; a generic dark fantasy scenario suitable for play with all good fantasy role-playing games such as Advanced Dungeons & Dragons™, Warhammer FRP™, Earthdawn™, Palladium FRP™, GURPS Fantasy™, Runequest™ and Rolemaster™. This adventure is good for groups of all levels and skill mixes as all encounters can be modified to suit the abilities of the players.

GETTING TO VANGRE

Referees who have been following the Unae setting as presented in *Australian Realms* should have their players already adventuring in or around Vangre. *The Doomed City* scenario (Issue 20) has the players employed by Vangre's merchant Reganto, Vincenzo Heletiano, to recover the Holy Sword of St Baimio. If the players were successful, they will have already made their way back to Vangre to collect their reward.

This adventure works best if the players are still in the Reganto's service. His connections within the city, and his crucial role in many of the events that occur during the siege, make him the ideal employer for the players. You will find his direct involvement removes much of the setting up required to stage some of the adventure hooks.

If your players aren't already in Vangre, there are a number of ways of getting them there. Vangre is a centre of trade and commerce. Fleets of trading ships in need of men-at-arms, merchants requiring adventurers to ensure the safe passage of their cargoes, and rumours of the many surprises the vast Undercity holds are enough to attract all sorts, or the players could be given a delivery job from any Dormetian city sending them to Vangre.

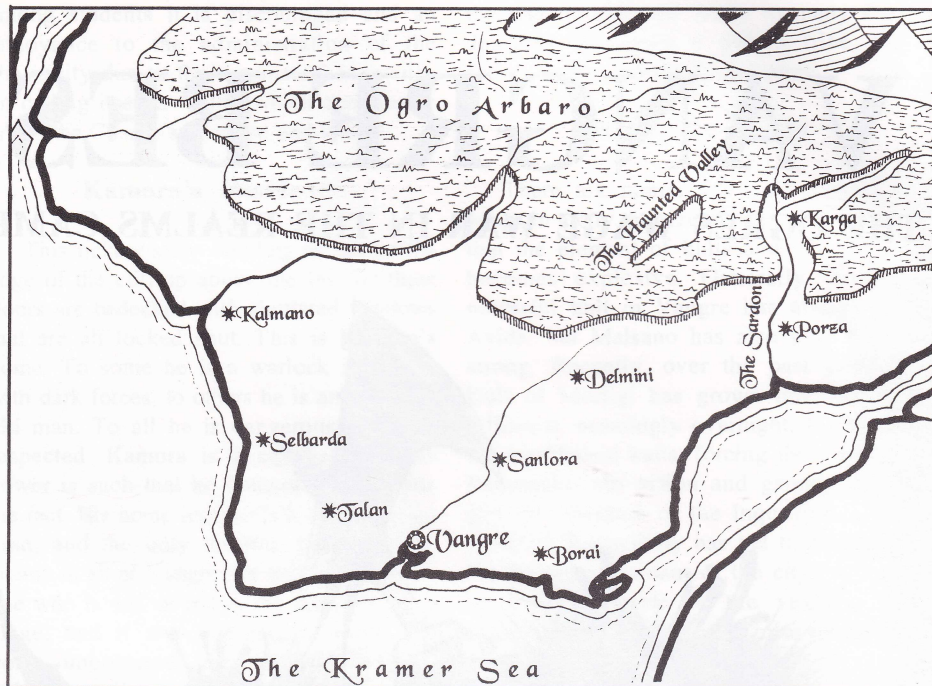
Once the player characters are in the city, especially if they have never been there before, referees might first wish to run them through the *Vangre Below* scenario from Issue 12. This quick and simple scenario introduces a number of key characters and locations and serves as an excellent introduction to the city of Vangre. This could also serve to establish their reputation in the city as people who can get the job done.

A THREAT DISCOVERED

1. A Quiet Little Job: After proving their abilities through some mission, such as either retrieving the Holy Sword of St Baimio (issue 20), or the task detailed in *Vangre Below* (issue 12), the players are given a new assignment. Their employer asks them to undertake a scouting mission to the "Haunted Valley", located a few days travel from Vangre. This valley is said to be the place where a huge battle took place between the Darner Ogres and the Heletians centuries ago. Today, strange noises, apparitions and lights are said to occur at night within the valley. This should be the last time that ogres are mentioned - for the full impact of the ogre siege, the players must remain ignorant of what they are really heading into.

Their employer tells them that he just wishes them to explore the valley for a couple of days to try and locate some ruins. The ruins are said to contain the laboratory of a famous wizard, rumoured to have discovered the secret of turning lead into gold. Once the players find the ruins, they are to return immediately with a detailed map. Their employer will then join them on an official expedition to try to retrieve the wizard's notebooks. The players are given horses for their journey, if they do not have mounts of their own.

The players should spend a couple of days bumbling around the forest, having a few minor encounters along the way (but NO ogres!). Referees who wish to, can expand this expedition as much as they like, but it's real purpose is only to get the players involved in the ogre invasion from the very beginning, scaring them witless.



2. Some New Friends: After a few days exploring, the players eventually come over a rise in the forest and look down into a large cleared valley. A river runs through the valley, and the ruins of an old town are crumbling in the valley's centre. The most striking thing that the players will discover is that the valley is filled with ogres. Initial estimates will put their numbers at ten to twenty thousand, more ogres than anyone ever thought existed in the whole of the Darner Mountains! (If referees wish to see the effect that you are trying for, get a copy of the movie *Zulu Dawn* where a small force of cavalry ride over a hill and see thousands of Zulus waiting to attack - it is priceless).

The ogres are obviously dressed for war, with banners unfurled, war drums reskinned and weapons cleaned and sharpened. Allow enough time for the players to take in what they are looking at, and then have them chased by several *hundred* screaming ogres. Let the players be in no doubt - they are in very serious trouble - they have just discovered a huge ogre army, only three days march from Vangre. Fortunately for the players, the ogres have no mounts, so the players should be able to make a quick getaway. Their escape should still be a close one however. Have arrows and spears whistle over their heads, smaller scouting parties of ogres try to intercept the group, bolts of magical fire singe their eyebrows. This encounter merely serves as the curtain raiser to the main adventure, so the referee's intention here is not to maim the players, but for the players to think that they have made a miraculous escape. Having made their escape, the players should be encouraged to make their way back to Vangre - if not to warn the population, then at least to find a relatively safe and secure place to withstand an assault from an ogre army!

3. Refugees: Returning to Vangre, the players will pass numerous small settlements of farmers and the odd rural village or two. The players may choose to warn the inhabitants or not, it is up to them, but a few well-placed children should soften even the toughest of hearts. If the locals are warned, they will take the threat very seriously, quickly bundling their possessions into wagons and following the

players to Vangre. If the players spend longer than a day warning outlying villages, they notice a dust cloud in the direction of the Ogro Arbaro.

The ogres are on the move.

4. Doubting Thomas: Following the Sarmona River, the players and their caravan of refugees arrive at the gates of Vangre. The strange entourage attracts immediate attention, but the player's explanation is not well received. When presented to a city magistrate they are severely berated for upsetting the outlying villagers with senseless lies. "There are not ten thousand ogres left alive in the whole of Dormetia" the official tells them, they have obviously been seeing visions. The magistrate then tells the assembled farmers and villagers to go back home, that there is nothing to worry about. If the players say nothing, over half of the assembled refugees start heading back, towards certain death. If the players do object, the peasants eventually rush the gates, hoping to break into the city and safety. The official arrests the players for inciting a riot, but in the confusion that follows, the players should be able to escape into the city.

5. The Ogres Are Coming! The players may spend the rest of the day trying to convince others of the imminent threat of invasion, so referees should use this as a good role-playing opportunity for the players. Convincing the average Vangre resident will not be easy. Older locals are easier to convince than many others. As a general rule, only about 1 in 10 people can be convinced that a threat exists, whereas the remainder will either laugh or berate the players. Heletiano will listen to their tales, but with extreme skepticism, attributing their visions of ogres to superstitious belief in the ghost legends of the "Haunted Valley". That night however, distant fires are seen to the north, and an uneasiness begins to fill the minds of the people of Vangre.

Next morning, a unit of militia ride out of town, towards the Ogro Arbaro. Two hours later, only half of them return. One hour later still, the church bells throughout Vangre begin to ring, and militia units begin rushing through the streets. The city gates are quickly closed and barred.

The ogres have come to Vangre.

THE SIEGE OF VANGRE

Summary of Events - The First Three Weeks

The following brief notes are provided as background information for referees. The events detailed below occur within the first twenty-one days of the siege of Vangre, the period covered by this first instalment of the two-part mini-campaign. They serve as a rough timeline of events, providing an overall framework to the various sub-plots and adventure hooks to be detailed next. It may also be that the players get physically involved in any of the following events by being in the wrong place at the wrong time, or at the whim of their referee.

Day One - The ogre armies take position around Vangre. Estimates place numbers at between 15,000 to 21,000 ogres. No siege weapons are in evidence, but full scale deforestation of surrounding woodlands begins almost immediately. The ogres spend much of the first day setting up camp and commencing ritual insults.

Day Three - Ogres continue to play the waiting game. Construction of siege equipment begins. During the first three nights of the siege, almost 200 sailing vessels have disappeared from Vangre docks. Reganto Heletiano issues placating messages to all citizens that there is nothing to be concerned about - food stocks are high, fresh water is plentiful, military units within the city are more than capable of repelling invaders etc. Word has been sent to neighbouring Heletian League States including King Giovanni of Greater Baimiopia. That night, ogre cabalists begin chanting, chilling the blood of all who hear them.

Day Four - The number of ships leaving drops as ogre cabalists randomly attack ships at sea.

Day Five - The reason for the chanting finally becomes evident as Vangre's stocks of grain begin to spoil. Prices for perishables begin to increase daily from this point on. Ogres begin their first assaults on the city. Magical fire leaps the walls (in both directions, some will notice) and spot fires begin in districts immediately adjacent to walls. Initial ogre attacks are repelled quite easily.

Day Eleven - Fighting breaks out between Elves from the Aiman-Ro quarter and the nearby Flet quarter. Fighting is particularly bloody until elves manage to barricade themselves in relative safety within their compound. Word is received that the Heletian cities of Portre and Argentia, and some of the cities of Burvoy are also besieged. The ogre offensive is along the length of the Heletian Spine Mountains, no reinforcements will be coming. Reganto Heletiano issues a public notice that reinforcements are on their way. Morale is boosted significantly. That night, 20 Des Sankta Glavos Knights (two thirds of those in Vangre) ride out to attack ogre siege equipment - none return.

Day Fourteen - A merchant vessel from Portre is sunk as it tries to make an escape to sea. Initial thoughts that it was the work of an ogre cabalist are quashed when Benefice Sontara issues an edict that any further attempts to abandon the city to ogres will be met with a similar fate. Vocal protests of the mercantile community and foreign quarters are put down by the actions of the remaining Des Sankta Glavos. Ogre forces begin assaults in earnest.

Day Sixteen - Disturbing new phase in ogre siege tactics begins. In an attempt to promote disease among the Vangre populace, human and ogre corpses are both flung over the battlements and floated down the Sarmona River. Non-combative citizens are press-ganged into clean up patrols and the smell of burning flesh soon fills the air as funeral pyres are raised throughout the city.

Day Nineteen - Half way through the day, ogres force a breakthrough in the north-western quarter of the city, when the northern gate falls. Vangre forces move to holding positions at the bridges crossing the Sarmona River and the south-western quarter. Later counter-attacks force the ogres back to the slums, where they are held.

Day Twenty One - Martial law declared in Vangre. All able-bodied men and suitably skilled women are hereby to consider themselves available for militia service, should the situation worsen. Vehement protests of church priests are ignored as Reganto Heletiano offers to meet with agents of the Cabal. His invitation is accepted.

SIEGE PLOTLINES

What follows are a number of adventure hooks that can be played out over the first three weeks of the siege of Vangre. Some of these scenarios are fully self-contained events that are best run at the appropriate stage of the siege, but most can be run at any time, allowing a fair bit of flexibility for referees and their players. As a rough guide for referees, after the title of each adventure hook, the period of days during which the scenario could be placed is given in brackets. Only three events have to be played on a specific day of the siege.

1. Vangre Needs You! (1-21) - Although martial law is not declared until Day 21, from the very beginning of the siege town criers, priests and public notices constantly bombard the general population with the message that service in the Vangre militia would be looked on "most favourably". The players can expect to be confronted by militia recruiting officers on a number of occasions each day, and asked to "join up for the good of Vangre".

After Day 16 of the siege, once things become a bit more desperate, press-gangs begin to frequent the quieter streets, forcibly "volunteering" unaccompanied adventurers into militia service. These press-gangs are not officially sanctioned, but nevertheless they still receive one gold florin for each volunteer they manage to bring in. Any player travelling by himself could easily become fair game to a group of press-gangers, or a group of players could accidentally come across one of these recruiting incidents taking place.

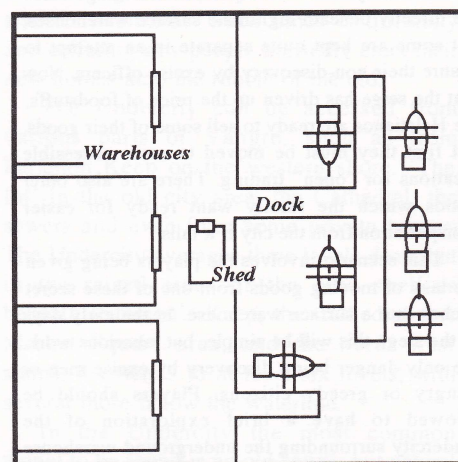
2. The Walls (1-21) - Should a player end up being press-ganged into militia service, or even if the whole party decides to join the battle proper, then they can expect a torrid time on the walls of Vangre. The ogres are skilled and vicious fighters, giving no quarter and expecting none in return. Their's is a proud warrior race, fighting for its life, and to lose the battle here means that their race is most probably doomed to extinction. Each ogre is from nine to ten feet tall, heavily muscled and perfectly built for war (see *The Ogre Clans* in Issue

12 for more background information). They carry a variety of weapons, but giant axes, and the infamously nicknamed "three-handed sword" (a three yard long sword), are their preferred tools.

The tactics employed by the ogres are relatively crude but, when backed up by their sheer ferocity, also quite effective. Their main strategy when storming the walls is to assault the ramparts with ladders and simple siege towers, covered by arrow fire. Once a section of battlement has been cleared of defenders, an ogre cabalist joins the battle, adding his magical firepower to the assault. The north-west quarter of Vangre is successfully breached on Day 19 when ogre cabalists capture both gate-houses adjoining the northern gate.

Once an ogre gets both feet on the battlements, it will not retreat, preferring to die with as many defenders' lives on his or her hands as possible.

The Heletiano Dock



3. Guarding the Boats (1-14) - The first real assignment given to the players is to guard the docks owned by their employer, Vincenzo Heletiano. Heletiano is well aware that if panic grips the populace, then he stands to lose a substantial portion of his fleet of ships (and hence a last ditch means of escaping the city with as much wealth as possible, should Vangre actually fall) to those seeking to flee the siege.

Heletiano has a number of sailing vessels, from small coastal fishing boats to large, ocean-going merchantmen, and a number of private docks on the western side of Nolanta Bay. The players are given control of one of these docks and its adjoining warehouse, which services six merchant vessels. They are allowed to store their gear on one of the merchantmen, and can consider this their temporary base of operations for the entire siege.

Initial encounters should be limited to desperate citizens looking to flee the conflict, but later encounters can certainly be more dangerous as armed gangs seek to steal vessels for their own ends. The players could encounter all social classes, with rich merchant families offering bribes for passage on a vessel, opportunistic citizens looking for plunderable cargoes, or thieves guilds offering money or favours for being allowed to "borrow" a vessel for the evening to smuggle black market goods into the city. The ogres might also try floating flaming rafts down the Sarmona river to ignite the very sailing ships that the players and others are assigned to protect. These are desperate times, the referee should keep the players busy with harrassing encounters day and night.

After Day 14 of the siege, no vessel can leave Vangre without express permission (see *Sailing Permits* below), so this effectively frees up the players for other activities, as no-one is willing to risk stealing a vessel and facing the wrath of the Benefice. As this "guard duty" is one that the players are given to keep them occupied until they are needed elsewhere for more important tasks, they can return to it a number of times throughout the first two weeks of the siege.

4. Hidden Assets (1-21) - This adventure hook serves to introduce players to the Undercity, and can be used if players do not run through the *Vangre Below* scenario prior to playing this adventure. As well as dozens of legitimate warehouses, the Heletiano family also has a number of hidden warehouses, secreted under the streets of Vangre in the warren of tunnels known as the Undercity. Most of these secret storage areas are directly beneath legitimate surface warehouses, but some are kept quite separate in an attempt to ensure their non-discovery by excise officers. Now that the siege has driven up the price of foodstuffs, the Heletianos are ready to sell some of their goods, but first they must be moved to more accessible locations for "open" trading. There are also other goods which the family want ready for easier transportation from the city if it falls.

This scenario involves the players being given the task of moving goods from one of these secret caches into a surface warehouse. In the early days of the siege this will be simple, but laborious work, the only danger being discovery by excise men or hungry or greedy citizens. Players should be allowed to have a brief exploration of the Undercity surrounding the underground warehouse during one of these trips, if for no other reason than to acquaint themselves with one of Vangre's most famous "attractions".

As the siege progresses however, this task becomes more dangerous, with an encounter with kultists, or the goblin tribe that lives under the city streets more and more likely each time the players venture underground. For referees who feel particularly vicious, after Day 19 of the siege, the players could be given an assignment to recover goods from a secret cache that sits under the north-west section of the city that has been overrun by the ogres. The players will have to be extremely careful or risk discovery by the ogre troops directly above their heads.

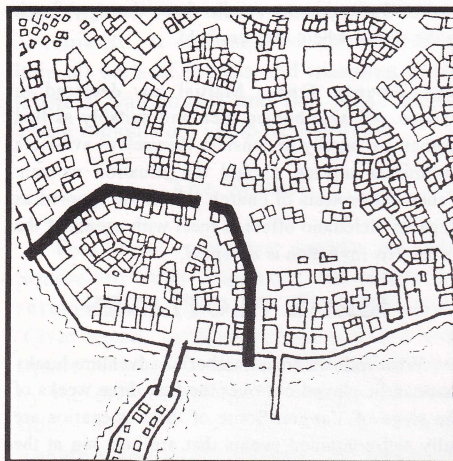
5. Money Troubles (5-21) - The siege affects general commerce in a number of different ways. Initial optimism that the siege would be broken by the time food stocks became low is shattered when the effects of the ogre's chanting are finally realised. Silos of grain, still more than half full with the previous spring's harvest, become infested with a type of fungus, making over three quarters of the crop inedible. Similarly, stocks of fruit and vegetables begin to age at three times the normal rate, and supplies will soon become inedible after only a few more days. Fortunately, the ogre cabalists' spell only appears to affect plant products, so meat and fish are unaffected, but these will not last long given that the other food stocks quickly become useless. Food prices increase at a rate of 10% per day for the rest of the siege.

Other goods are also affected by the siege. All weapons and defensive supplies (ropes, candles,

blankets, oil etc.) are reserved for serving militia personnel only. A black market in these items soon appears, with restricted supplies made available at exorbitant (+200%) prices through various back-alley operators.

There are a number of day to day activities that the players can get involved in using this plot thread. The Heletiano warehouses need guarding from thieves and black marketeers. Essential supplies will need to be safely delivered. Merchants forced to increase prices to cope with reduced stocks, will need protection from angry crowds.

The Importers' Bazaar



6. The Aiman-Ro Riot (Day 11) - If so desired by the referee, the players can walk right into the middle of the hostilities between the Flets and the Elves. With the city militia fully occupied defending the city walls, the Flets have decided to use this opportunity to take their frustrations out on their traditional enemies. Fighting initially breaks out in the Importer's Bazaar, but quickly spreads to surrounding streets. The recent events in Ossard have not gone unnoticed, and local Heletians, afraid of the mysterious elves and an unknown future, also join the fray.

At one stage, a large group of elven traders and militia is cut off in the centre of the Bazaar, unable to reach the safety of Aiman-Ro. As a result, the fighting soon becomes quite bloody, as elven cabalists within the trapped group no longer restrain themselves and hurl magical bolts into the crowd. The elves, as always, have little concern for anyone but themselves and attack anyone who gets in their way.

The fighting continues for most of the day, until the surviving elves manage to barricade themselves into their walled enclave, Aimon-Ro.

7. Speaker's Square (11-21) - This encounter serves merely to introduce the players to the various factions that inhabit the city, given new bravado by the preoccupation of the church priests. Unable to split themselves between repelling the invaders, healing the wounded and keeping the strict doctrines of the church policed, the priests of the Church of Baimiopia have had to let the more vocal members of some groups have their moment in the spotlight. The speaker's stand, audaciously placed directly between the Reganto's Residence and the great Cathedral of Vangre in the City Square is now nearly in constant use, with kultists, students, merchants and others all having their say.

As the players may have to pass this area a number of times throughout the siege (their employer's house one possible destination), they will often be berated by the current occupant of the Speaker's Stand. Some of these individuals spout the word of St Baimio, but many more use the opportunity to push their own private causes. This encounter can be used a number of times, allowing referees to give the players some background information, adventure hooks and current rumours.

If the players pass this area more than once, they will notice that a new "kult" appears to have gained some popularity. The Order of the Cleansing Ekzalti espouses "retribution and purification through the Creator's holy fire" and seems convinced that the "blessed flames of purity" will free the citizens from their current troubles. The kult takes on a fanatical twist when one of the followers, Mathius Laguna, achieves spontaneous martyrdom by setting himself alight and burning to death on the steps of the Great Cathedral.

8. The Walking Dead (Day 16) - The power of ogre necromancers is frighteningly demonstrated on Day 16 of the siege. As mentioned in the *Summary of Events* above, at this stage of the siege, the ogres begin attempting to bring plague to the city, by catapulting dead bodies over the walls and floating them down the Sarmona river. While the thought of dead bodies flying through the air and washing up on the shore is horrific enough, what makes this encounter particularly dangerous is that not all of the corpses are completely dead. Almost half of those that are floated down into Nolanta Bay actually crawl out of the water and begin attacking the citizens of Vangre.

The undead have been animated by ogre cabalists, and both human and ogre bodies are encountered. To increase the chances of spreading plague, and to further panic the populace, each of the bodies has been allowed to decompose for a few days, so the zombies are quite horrific in appearance and smell. The bodies are those of fallen ogre warriors, dead human militia taken from the walls, villagers who failed to escape the approaching ogre army and, particularly ironic, the twenty slain Sankta Glavos Knights. Some, mainly the human zombies, carry weapons, but the vast majority fight with teeth and claws. Each zombie bears a cabalist symbol, burned into its forehead.

The undead fight until destroyed by fire, or they are decapitated. Any player who is wounded by the teeth or claws of one of the zombies stands a 40% chance of contracting disease, curable only by healing magic.

Each night dozens of the dead climb out of the river, in all over 200 undead reach the streets that adjoin the docks over the length of the siege. There is a very good chance that the players will encounter a group of walking dead, especially if they are still residing on one of Heletiano's merchant ships.

9. Sailing Permits (14-21) - After the destruction of the Portre trading ship, only those vessels that obtain sailing permits countersigned by Reganto Heletiano and Benefice Sontara are allowed to leave Vangre harbour. These vessels are restricted to those ships that perform tasks specifically for the city of Vangre, such as performing courier duties, ferrying troops or mercy dashes for urgently needed food supplies. Those

ships that do not possess one of these sailing permits and attempt to leave will be destroyed. Heletiano and Sontara have realised that as many ships as possible will be needed to evacuate the citizens should Vangre appear certain to fall, and so wish to keep a tight control over the number of ships within the city's many harbours.

While the Church did destroy the Portre ship, ogre cabalists are also watching the harbour, and have and will take potshots at sailing ships. A permit to sail is no guarantee of safe passage.

A signed sailing permit (or even one that isn't signed - forgers employed by the thieves guild have already mastered the city leaders' signatures) is worth far more than its 500 gold florin fee. A sailing permit offers an escape opportunity, or at least a chance to cash in on the city's problems by smuggling trade goods, so they are eagerly sought after by many interested parties.

For a couple of days, the players are involved in a number of tasks related to the sailing permits, providing a variety of situations for combat and role-playing. Blank permits have to be collected from the Mint to be taken to be signed by Heletiano and the Benefice. Completed and signed permits then have to be delivered to the master of the vessel seeking the permit. At any stage throughout these procedures, the players can be set upon by thugs, thieves, merchants offering bribes (the players may be tempted, but questions will be asked when the real permit holder reports that no permit arrived) and other affected parties.

The players may also get involved in attempts to recover stolen permits, or to locate the hiding place of the forgers. A battle on the deck of an illegally fleeing merchantman could be an exciting change from the rigours of the siege, especially if the players know that the ship has been marked for destruction once it reaches the end of Nolanta Bay, and that their success in attempting to seize the ship is all that can prevent this from happening.

10. Family Matters (20-21) - While the siege should be uppermost in most people's minds, there are those who actively and continually seek to profit from the plight of others. Thus it is on Day 20 of the siege when Reganto Heletiano is contacted by an agent of Jeunet Pisani, the head of the mercantile guild. In return for a number of concessions, including six sailing permits, Jeunet offers to reveal the location of Anna Heletiano, the Reganto's "kidnapped" daughter. Anyone who has spent more than a few months in Vangre has heard about the mysterious disappearance of Anna Heletiano. Vincenzo Heletiano claims that she has been kidnapped by kultists, but underground rumours have it that she voluntarily joined up with a kult of the Horned God and that the kidnap story is purely to stave off embarrassment.

What gives Jeunet's message even greater import, however, is the fact that Anna's "hideout" is said to be located somewhere in the section of the city that has recently been captured by the ogres. While her current location is said to be relatively safe at present, he cannot guarantee that she will remain so for too much longer, as the ogre forces might soon begin to search or burn the houses in the slum quarter. As a consequence, the players are asked to stage an immediate rescue. Vincenzo Heletiano also gives the players instructions to exterminate, "with extreme prejudice", the kultists who have held his daughter for these many months.



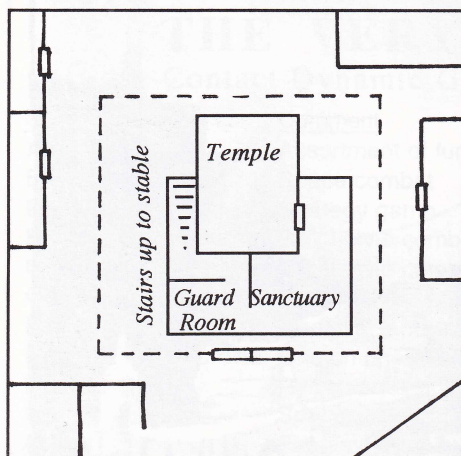
The players are given instructions to meet with their guide, a street-wise thief and messenger called Adolfo, in a side street near the Temple of St Romeo (area 25 on the Vangre City Map) at dusk that evening. Although the players are told approximately where to find the Reganto's daughter, Adolfo will have to take the players through the Undercity to a point close to the place where Anna Heletiano can be found, in order to avoid the battle for the north-west quarter. The actual rescue will be up to the players alone.

The journey through the Undercity should be filled with tension, as in some areas of the tunnels beneath the streets, the movement of troops and the sound of battle can clearly be heard overhead. Strange noises and movement at the periphery of vision are also common occurrences that should be played to the full throughout the journey. Unless the players have spent some time in Vangre therefore, and have thoroughly explored the Undercity, they will soon be quite lost.

This is a convenient plot device as, once the players are beyond the front lines and well into ogre territory, a section of the tunnel ceiling collapses (a result of a catapult shot), killing Adolfo. Although the players know where to find Anna Heletiano, the return journey is now going to be much more dangerous.

Anna is being "held" in a secret chamber, hidden under the floorboards of a small stable in the slum quarter. This large stone chamber is the regular meeting place of a group of kultists, worshippers of Stellis, the god of thieves (see Issue 15 for more information). Anna cared nothing for a life of thievery other than as a means of annoying her father and remaining close to her lover Fabio, the kult's leader. Recently however, Anna, being the spoilt little girl, has grown tired of this rebellion, and longs to return to her pampered lifestyle. Fabio has other ideas, and is using her, through his contacts with Jeunet Pisani, to turn a profit. He has no intention of letting Anna go, and has already

The Kultist's Hideout



beaten her once for trying to escape. Fabio and his fellow kultists (eight in total, with Fabio having just attained divine magic and two others classed as reasonable swordsmen) are intending to wait out the siege (they have little idea how bad things have recently become) in their hideout, before moving Anna to a safer location outside Vangre.

The players were told that the exit from the Undercity would bring them within three streets of the stable where Anna is hiding, but referees should feel free to make this distance much further away if the players have survived all previous encounters relatively unscathed. In any case, the players will have to make a dash through streets controlled by ogre forces. The chances of discovery increase with the successes of the Vangre forces (as the ogres are pushed back to the slum quarter) so the quicker the players act, the better.

Assuming the players are successful in rescuing Anna (referees, role-play the rescue as you see fit, perhaps as a real hostage drama, with Fabio threatening to kill Anna rather than hand her over), they then have to make it back to safety. They could try and make their way back through the Undercity (which should now be a long and perilous journey, given that they have no guide), or they might try to sneak their way past the ogre forces and break through the lines at some point. Either way, the players are certainly going to have to earn their money on this one.

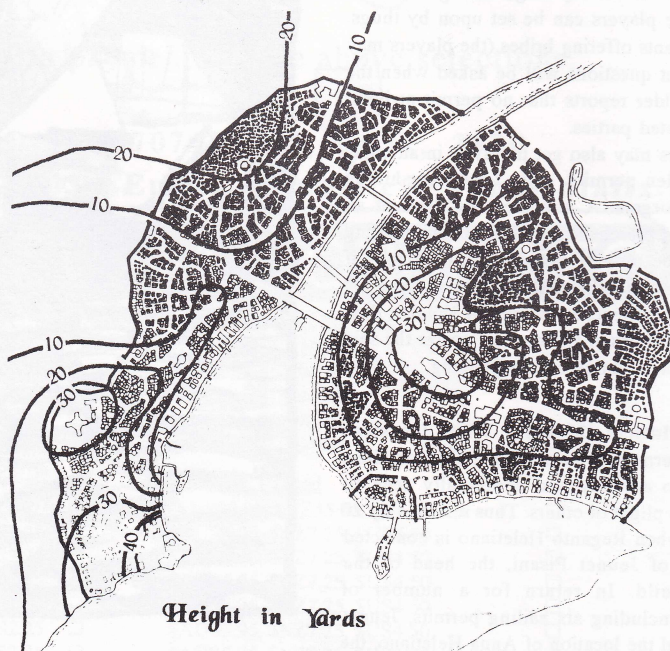
11. A Cabalistic Summons (Day 21) - The last task that the players are given in this first part of the mini-campaign is to summon members of the Vangre Cabal to meet with the Reganto. Having realised that obtaining the support of the Cabalists is probably essential, should Vangre wish to survive the current conflict, Heletiano is keen to sound out where the Cabal stands.

The first obvious choice for the players to make contact with the Cabal is Kamora (see the Vangre background information which follows this scenario). While his flagrant abuse of the doctrines of the local church makes him stand out like a beacon, this attitude will also lead to the players finding him a stubborn man to convince of Reganto Heletiano's sincerity. The players will have to work hard to maintain Kamora's interest and to get him to agree to attend the meeting.

Should the players make a real hash of their attempts to convince Kamora (who will turn up to the meeting anyway, whether invited or not), the

Vangre City Key

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. The Pit | 16. Mint |
| 2. Aimon-Ro | 17. Prabesk Quarter |
| 3. The Square | 18. Kanzige Quarter |
| 4. The Docks | 19. Burvois Quarter |
| 5. The Oil Works | 20. Flet Quarter |
| 6. Paramon's Keep | 21. The Heletiano Docks |
| 7. The High Chapel | 22. The Kramer Confederation Council |
| 8. The Unchino Circle | 23. The Senate |
| 9. The Noktorue | 24. The Reganto's Residence |
| 10. Importer's Bazaar | 25. The Temple of St Romeo |
| 11. The University | 26. The Cathedral |
| 12. Kamora's Residence | 27. Residential Area |
| 13. Sarmona's Tower | 28. Commercial Area |
| 14. Naval Port | 29. Slums |
| 15. Guild District | 30. Graveyard |



players will have to find some other way of contacting the local Cabal. This shouldn't be too difficult if one of the players happens to be one who practices the "art" (and has managed to avoid the attention of priests and Des Sankta Glavos), then he can approach the Cabal directly. If strict rules of Cabal conduct have been followed, the player should have already presented themselves at the local Cabal meeting chambers to announce their presence in Vangre soon after arriving in the city. If so, arranging the meeting with Heletiano should merely be a formality.

Players without formal contacts with the Vangre Cabal will have to be a bit more subtle in their investigations and subsequent approach to the Cabal. This last adventure hook is provided as a

role-playing opportunity for the players to become more intimate with some of the powers running Vangre. The task may be made as simple or as difficult as the referee so desires, bearing in mind that a meeting between Reganto Heletiano and the Cabal should always be the end result.

Here ends the first installment of the ogre mini-campaign. Vangre is under immense pressure from the ferocious and determined ogres. Elsewhere in Dormetia, other cities are also in peril and who knows what the Kurger, with his united clans and cabalists might achieve. It appears that the humans of Dormetia have enjoyed a soft life for too long and with this massed assault they are being given a very rude awakening.



Next issue we will bring you the thrilling climax to this epic adventure and reveal what new surprises the ogres have in store for the beleaguered citizens of Vangre. Be there.

UNAE REFERENCES

For further readings on the workings of magic, both divine and cabalist in the Unae campaign world, see issue 21's Unae source articles - *Magic In Unae*, *Faiths of Dormetia*, and *The Dormetian Cabal*. The *Church of Baimiopia* and the *Ogre Clans* source articles can be found in issue 12, and *Kultist* is in issue 15.

Following this adventure is an article providing more detail on the city of Vangre itself.

On a low hill to the north-east of Vangre, an ogre in full regalia stood and watched the progress of the battle. He was joined by a sub-commander, who knelt before his lord, offering a salute. When the salute had been acknowledged, the sub-commander rose and made his report.

"The tunnel is nearly completed, my Kurger. We shall be through to the old spy passage within the hour."

"Excellent" smiled the ogre commander. "Have one-half of the third arm withdrawn immediately to take up positions within the tunnels. Tell the leaders they are not to move out into the city until they hear the signal. And fetch Garrekk, the shaman. We shall be needing a special diversion for tomorrow morning...."

It is 515EK - late Autumn, and blood gathers like fallen leaves. ☉

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VANGRE: CITY OF SAILS

IN THE AUSTRALIAN REALMS FANTASY CAMPAIGN WORLD OF UNAЕ

VANGRE

Vangre (pronounced *Van-grey*) is the largest of the eight city-states within the Kramer Confederation. This is reflected in its large population and boisterous economy.

The city is best known for its exports of rare timbers, ships and textiles. The free-minded city is also known, to a lesser degree, for the Black Gold products it sells; a small island off the south-east coast of Vangre contains the area's only oil springs. The Black Gold is transformed into a variety of useful products, ranging from high-grade lamp oil to Hellfire, a prized inflammable weapon of war.

Vangre is ruled through a senate of twenty-one, whose members are taken from the most powerful merchant houses of the city. The ruler of the city is known as the *Reganto*, and is chosen by the Senators every five years. This system, while not incorruptible, has been adhered to for over three centuries, and generally served the city well. The current Reganto is Vincenzo Heletiano, of the Heletiano merchant family and associated trading companies. This family's wealth, power and connections are not to be underestimated. If you are to become involved in the commerce of Vangre, you will invariably become involved with one of the many arms of the Heletiano business empire.

Vangre has the largest fleet of any of the Kramer Confederation City States, and thus has incurred the largest share of the Kramer patrol roster that is undertaken in order to keep the surrounding seas safe from pirates. Her ships fly the city's emblem which is of a fortress overlooking the sea, in the colours of blue and gold. Some say that several of the navy's ships also now sail with a special 'advisor' aboard, rumours tell of such people being Cabalists (see issue 21), others claim that they're Messengers (see issue 14), and yet others have suggested that they are simply Church missionaries (see issue 12).

Vangre's vast wharves are one of the wonders of Unae, with thousands of multi-hued sails fluttering in the breeze forming a moving tapestry of colour. Such a sight rims one of the deepest natural harbours to be found in all of Dormetia, known to the locals as Nolanta Bay.

THE HISTORY OF VANGRE

Vangre was established by Heletian colonists nearly ten centuries ago upon the smouldering ashes of a sacked ogre fortress (the fortress' lower levels now form part of Paramon Keep's dungeons). The leader of the Heletians was told by his seers that the rising seas had stabilised, his priests agreed, and so too did the cabalists among his tribe. So, with the enemy seemingly vanquished, the sea no longer rising, and a great harbour at his feet, Stephan Paramon founded Vangre, the beautiful City of Sails.

It took eight years to build the first version of Paramon Keep. The sturdy fortress overlooked the harbour, and was surrounded by a city of five thousand souls (exclusively on the west bank at this time). As the years passed, and the city grew in size, population, and importance (despite various setbacks), it needed more cleared land. Within a century the city had spread to the east bank of the wide Sarmona River. Wooden shacks gave way to stone buildings, the streets were cobbled, a wall was thrown around the city limits for protection, and (a major engineering feat) a bridge was built across the Sarmona finally uniting the west and east banks of the city despite a long and bitter campaign of sabotage waged by angry ferry operators.

Vangre grew continually, but also cycled through terrible periods marked by pestilence, storms, pirates and brutal ogre raids. The city has been razed eight times, once due to fire, twice by storms, and the remainder due to daring ogre attacks. While the city bears an unfortunate history of disaster and death, such calamity has not been suffered for the past two centuries and the ogre treat has been all but forgotten. One, and perhaps now the only, threat the city faces lurks beneath, within Vangre's infamous '*Undercity*'.

THE UNDERCITY

The Undercity is the remains of the original lower levels of the ogre fortress-town that existed prior to Vangre's founding, plus the various other sewers and buildings that have been put in and then forgotten, buried or partially destroyed.

Because the city has had such an active history over the past millennium, a great deal of haphazard planning has seen the city built upon itself time after time. This is mainly due to the city being razed repeatedly and needing to hurriedly be rebuilt in order to shelter its citizens. Such times of difficulty and suffering saw people hurriedly erect their new homes atop the rubble of the old.

The Undercity can be accessed from various parts of Vangre, such as from Paramon Keep on the western shore, 'The Pit' in the old city area, the Cathedral, the sewers and even from some private homes. The Undercity averages three levels deep, but in the raised areas of the city, such as beneath Paramon's Keep, the Cathedral (or) Market Square area, and the north west slums, it extends to at least six levels, with several more below the waterline.

In the Undercity the most common tunnel to be found is an old sewer; but natural caves, old basements, cellars, catacombs and even an old section of street (complete with abandoned stores and houses beneath Vangre's Mint) can be found.

The Undercity is a dangerous place frequented by occasional ogre raiders, a resident goblin tribe, the Thieves' Guild, Horned God Kultists, and a Necromancer named Pietro Carra who has sealed off the tunnels under Vangre's cathedral for his own perverse use. Also to be found are the seemingly more harmless but still as deadly beggars, squatters, plague-carrying rats and diseased waters; truly this is a perilous place.

HIGHLIGHTS OF VANGRE

Following is a guide to the city with all the major or most likely visited areas given further detail. Feel free to add to the information given, using this as an opportunity to make your own contribution to the 'gritty and real' world of Unae.

The Pit

This area, also known as '*The Old City*', is a sunken section of Vangre that faces a wedge-shaped cliff that many of the dingy taverns, pubs, and other 'unglamorous' establishments of the area are dug into. This area is ten yards lower than that of the

University and Kamora's Residence above, upon the top of the cliff. Many of the establishments are actually part of the Undercity, being built into the cliff face some even have access tunnels to the true Undercity. Those establishments that don't back against the cliff face are huddled together in a tightly packed maze of streets and alleys that would put a Prabesk Bazaar to shame. This is a seedy and 'exciting' part of Vangre, and for this reason the militia does not patrol the Old City after dark. Muggings, pick pocketing, and worse are all common crimes in the area. The district is also a favourite place for the more daring students of the above University, many feeling that roughing it in the Pit makes them more 'manly'. Unfortunately some don't survive long enough to reach full manhood.

Aiman-Ro

This stretch of the docks is the Elf Quarter of Vangre and is a walled enclave that only their own kind are allowed to enter unescorted. The gates to the quarter are guarded by the elves' own militia (part of the Serhaem city state's militia), and the district's streets are patrolled by the same authority. The elves of the area are almost exclusively from Serhaem (issue 11), any others are from Wair-Rae (issue 26), the Colonies (issue 25), or Lae Ossard (issue 20).

Most native Vangrians, deep down, don't take kindly to the restriction the elves have placed on Aiman-Ro, but as any animosity or challenge to the elven laws of their small district would effect trade (and thus profits) people accept it as a necessity.

The elves have been in Aiman-Ro now for one hundred and ninety six years, buying the old walled dockside district from the Heletiano family who sold the historic area for a hefty price, and an agreement that would give them a virtual monopoly on elven imports from Wair-Rae (this is one of the reasons the Heletiano's are Vangre's wealthiest merchant family).

Since the time of the sale the elves have put great efforts into transforming the district into something more reminiscent of their home. Slowly the buildings have been modified so as to take on the more solid and flowing style found in the Pillar Cities of Wair-Rae, some buildings even being clad in expensive marbles. Currently, one wealthy elven merchant named Kas-Masio, who calls Aiman-Ro home, is trying to convince Reganto Heletiano and the Aiman-Ro Grand Council that he should be able to build a Pillar Tower, such as the buildings that have given the Pillar Cities of Wair-Rae their unique look and name. The authorities oppose the construction because of the obtrusiveness of the structure, and the considerations of how it might rile the

general population. Kas-Masio, however, is a wealthy elf, and is wise to how business is done with such men. He believes eventually his tower will stand, and with their approval.

Adjoining Aiman-Ro is Nolania-Ro, a small island that has been heavily worked over for centuries, transforming it into just another section of the docks. Nolania-Ro is a place that is joined to the Aiman-Ro by a single stone bridge, and not accessible in any other way apart from by water. The bridge is guarded around the clock by four elves in two groups of two at either end. No-one, apart from elves, are allowed on Nolania-Ro. It is rumoured that the elves hide all sorts of secrets and treasures in the island's warehouses and one small tower. These rumours are yet to be confirmed.

The Square

This area is known simply as 'The Square' by most Vangrians, but others use several names such as 'Cathedral Square', 'Civic Square' or 'Market Square'. It is a wide square filled with market stalls and flanked by the civic buildings of Vangre on three sides, and the Cathedral on the fourth. Vangre's two main avenues run along the Square's sides. It is always a busy, crowded and well patrolled place. The Square offers one of the best markets in all of the Heletian League; here an entire myriad of things can be found that are only rumour or even legend in other more regimented Heletian cities. Like many other Heletian cities, the Square is a focal point for Vangre's residents, and is the main venue for Church festivals, public ceremonies, floggings, hangings and regal and military parades.

Underneath the Square are the *Catacombs*, accessed from Vangre's *Great Cathedral* (and several forgotten entrances that link them to the Undercity). The Catacombs are a place for religious and civic officials to be interned. It is a dark, cold, and lonely place, even if it be the most honourable site to be laid to rest in the city.

The Docks

The dock areas are made up of rows of warehouses and small commercial offices for merchant companies. Generally the area is only safe during daylight. With the night comes smuggler gangs, thieves and also the infamous 'Spani Lechers' who terrorise passers by abducting, attacking and thieving whatever, whoever, and whenever, they care to. The gang is not a serious threat to law and order, they are just looking for a quick Florin, and can usually be found not far from the Burvois Quarter. Several other gangs operate in the dockside districts, but none have achieved any degree of infamy to rival that of the Spani's.

The Oil Works

These buildings are a grouping of new businesses that work to refine the oil taken from the Black Gold springs found on an island off the coast. The fisher folk of Vangre dislike the Works because oil has been seeping into the harbour for years, slowly tainting the fish, ruining their nets and staining their boats.

Of more concern to the city should be the fact that the same oil has slowly soaked into the lower levels of the Undercity, creating a potentially disastrous incendiary situation. If this fuel was ignited a large part of Vangre (particularly the west bank) would be razed yet again. Such a catastrophe would kill thousands and ruins hundreds of buildings and businesses. Thankfully, while the fuel is in place, several other conditions need to be met before such an explosion could erupt. This is something city authorities are aware of, using it as a convenient excuse to delay fixing the problem.

Paramon's Keep

This fortification is over nine centuries old and has seen a great number of uses and masters over time. Currently it is the residence for the Benefice of Vangre, one Mario Sontara. As the keep is currently controlled by the Church, it is also home to a force of Des Sankta Glavo and usually the residence to any travelling inquisitors who arrive in Vangre. Consequently, crime in the districts surrounding the Keep is nearly nonexistent, a blessing to the rich Unchino Circle residents who represent the wealthiest of Vangre's citizens.

The High Chapel

This is a large church built for the nearby residents and is administered by a small adjoining monastery. Residents of the Unchino Circle, and other nearby upper class areas on the west bank, use this church as 'their own'. Many wealthy residents who don't have good enough connections to be interned in the Catacombs will finally come to rest in the cemetery here.

Recently, strange occurrences have surfaced at the monastery, but these were subsequently hushed up by Church authorities. Rumours tell of a monk who claimed to have found old texts that speak of the true word of Saint Baimio and Krienta, not the modified teachings of today's Church. Apparently the monk concerned was said to be ill with a brain fever when he claimed such things, and it was while being treated for this ailment he regrettably fell down some stairs to his death. The site and timing of his demise are hushed by the monastery and even his fellow monks who

claim the deceased was prone to wander in his sleep. Such rumours do nothing for the Church; anyone heard retelling them, or even brave enough to mention them, in the face of Des Sankta Glavos, Church officials, theologians, or priests, will be taken to Paramon Keep 'for their own safety'.

The Unchino Circle

This is a pompous area of overwrought ostentation, where all of the successful merchant houses of Vangre (and other Kramer Confederation cities) 'must' have a household. This is a place of great wealth, frequent patrols and pampered gardens.

Many travellers to the city make their way up the hill to gawk at the extravagant residences of Vangre's elite. The area's reputation for parties of decadence and excess nearly matches its status as the most worthwhile target for burglary, with many thieves using the sewers and Undercity to move relatively unmolested into the area. Once in the district, thieves need only dodge the regular patrols, an easy task when the sprawling, thick gardens are taken into account. A watchmen recently estimated that he walked past half a dozen criminals each night on his patrol, his view and duties blocked by the gardens of the residents he was trying to protect.

The Noktorue

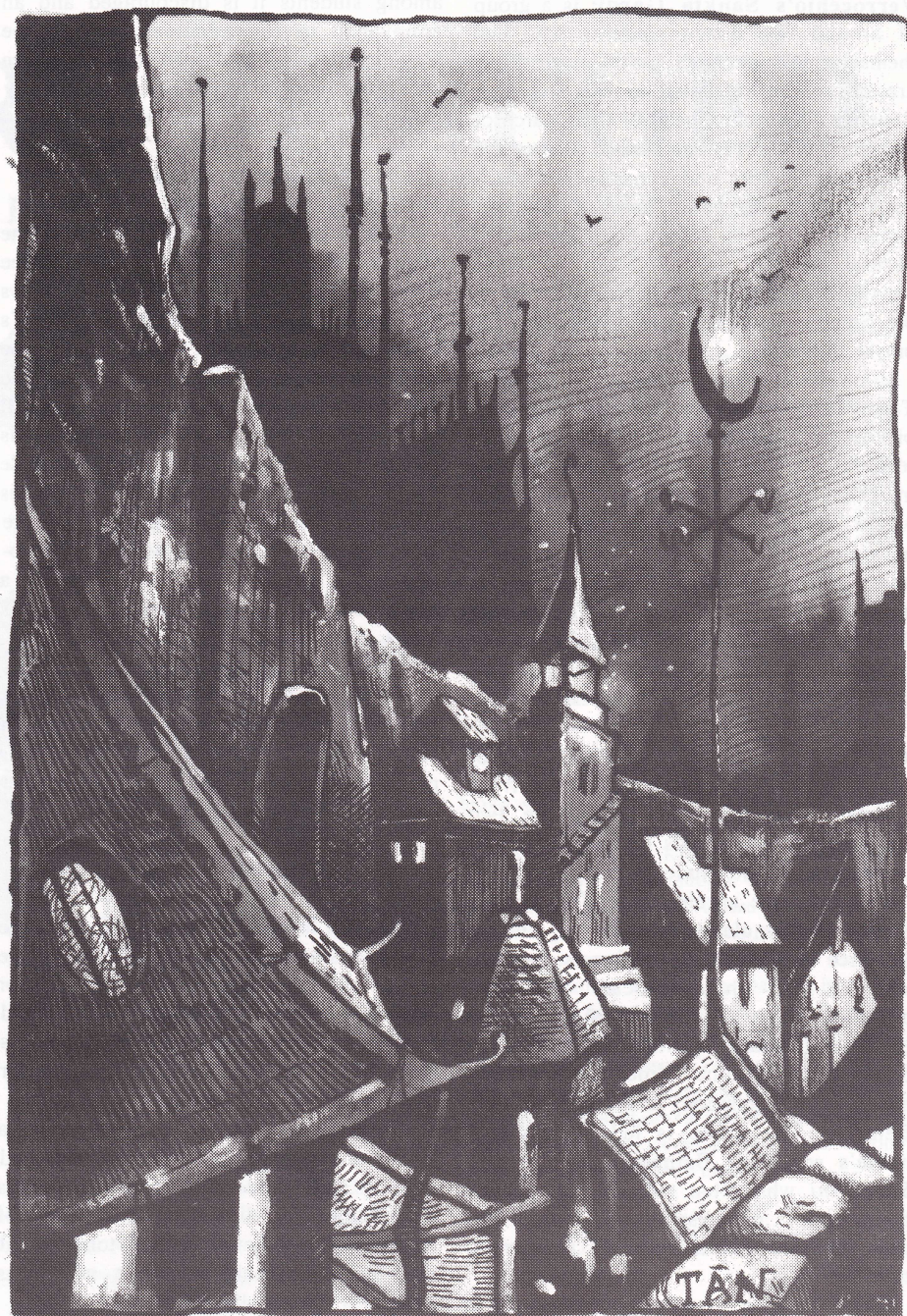
This is the district of reputable taverns and theatres. While taverns can be found throughout the city (particularly in 'the Pit') this grouping of streets represents the place to be seen. With over fifty pubs, gambling dens, six theatres and three Gentlemen's Clubs (which serve the merchant families of the city) and hundreds of street vendors, there's much happening at all hours.

The district starts at the north end of the street, opposite *Kamora's Residence* and encompasses all of the street (named Noktorue) to where it splits, then including both of these streets to where the westerly (Ordo Strato) ends facing the Cathedral and the easterly (the continuation of Noktorue) which hooks south and terminates opposite the *Mint*.

The area is patrolled and lit by street lamps at night, but due to the size of the crowds on the streets much can happen which goes unnoticed by city authorities.

Importers Bazaar

This smaller market place is an exotic bazaar of goods from across not only Dormetia, but all of Unae. For sale here are many forbidden items such as narcotics, poisons, and even illuminated erotic books! It is a well known saying in the Heletian



League that you can find anything for sale in Vangre's Market Square, and while that usually holds true, any exceptions can be found here, at the Importers Bazaar.

The University of Vangre

This is a place of great learning, many students come from across Dormetia to be educated here and to study in the institution's Grand Librarian. Recently the University of Vangre has lost some of its prestige and students to the newer 'Panori University' of Portre (issue 11).

The University itself consists of three main buildings, the largest and most southerly being for administration and learning, while the second is the Grand Librarian, and the third consists of

dormitories for students. Many smaller buildings are on the eastern side of the University's grounds overlooking The Pit. Most are small laboratories or offices, with a few better appointed dormitories also being found here built to house the elite from amongst the offspring of the nobility.

The University is an exciting place of knowledge and debate, often challenging the accepted views of Unae; this makes it also a home for radical idealists and more. Among the students and the academia are many who hold specific ideals high, often airing them in the Square, or using them to start brawls and other disturbances. The various factions with the largest followings among the student body are described below, as exposure to at least one group is unavoidable for any players spending any time in Vangre.

Verrocchio's Sankta Gardi: is a group of around two dozen students who call themselves *Verrocchio's Holy Guards*. They are of course referring to his Holiness, Benefice Verrocchio, head of the Church of Baimiopia (issue 12) and seek to protect him from hostile plots and conspiracies which they believe are being hatched by more conservative sects within the Church and several external forces. Their activities usually only extend to public speaking in the Square, gossiping about doctrine, and prayer meets.

The Vangre Komersa: this large and privileged organisation holds the future leaders of the Kramer Confederation's merchant community and guilds. It is a place where contacts are made and personal networks built. It is also a very sociable community. Mostly the Komersa is harmless, if not beneficial, but for the fact that the Kult of Avida (issue 15) actively recruits new followers from such places, seeking out the greedy and impressionable.

Vincenzo's Furio: this small sect of around a dozen students are mainly from Greater Baimiopia and Lixus, the two conservative strongholds for the Church of Baimiopia. These students spend most of their spare time arguing with Verrocchio's Sankta Gardi, claiming that the current Benefice is too soft on foreigners, heretics and the like. They advocate what they consider to be the only choice for the Heletian Leagues spiritual salvation, the elevation of Cardinal Vincenzo (currently head of the Inquisition) to the post of Holy Benefice. The group is led by a young noble's son from Baimiopia, one *Alban Scanelini* who often talks of going back home and "...progressing the cause". For now, he and his cronies sit in Vangre talking.

The Kramer Demokrat: these idealists number less than a dozen and advocate introducing an elected governor in each of the Kramer city-states. Their ideas are scoffed at and highly unpopular with their fellows, many of whom are destined to be holding power. The group does little but talk and is led by a maverick academic; Professor Carlos Fanzinni.

The Kult of Altigi: is the largest of all student groups and is little more than an 'escort service' that sees students down to The Pit and back safely whenever such a drinking night is on the cards. The 'Kult' simply organises enough numbers so that the group is largely safe from being accosted by the locals of The Pit, using its numbers to smother any troublemakers, or, occasionally, innocents. While popular

among students it is discouraged and an annoyance to the administration of the University due to the organisers' insistence on calling itself a 'Kult', which continually draws the Church's attention and wrath.

Kamora's Residence

This rickety stone building teeters on the edge of the cliff top above the Pit. Its three floors are bedecked with shuttered windows that are all locked shut. This is Kamora's home. To some he is a warlock in league with dark forces, to others he is an eccentric old man. To all he is dangerous and well respected. Kamora is a cabalist, and his power is such that he bothers little to hide the fact. His home represents a haven for his kind, and the only meeting place for the arcane in all of Vangre. He will speak to no-one who is not, or not in the company of, a mage, and if any non-magica enters his home unescorted, their life is forfeit... unless they give good reason otherwise.

Kamora is tolerated by the local Church, which feigns ignorance to his presence ever since a small force of inquisitors was prematurely sent on to the after life after requesting he leave the city.

Sarmona's Tower

This six level stone tower rises out of the river and is accessed only by the main bridge across the Sarmona. It is a prison for common criminals and is very well guarded (serious offenders are placed in Paramon's Keep, which has three levels of dungeons for such 'high risk' individuals).

Sarmona's Tower is a silent place, a legacy of a terrible policy that was enforced until 403EK. Under this policy prisoners responsible for disturbing the peace of nearby city residents had their tongues cut out by a Prabesk attendant who was employed specifically for the task.

KULTISTS IN VANGRE

Kults are an important part of the fabric of Vangre's shadows, being particularly active in the Undercity, but also within various criminal organisations and the corrupt Mercantile Guild. Each of these areas is detailed briefly below:

The Undercity

This is an amazing labyrinth of tunnels, pipes, ladders, stairs, caves and pits. From the sewers, to catacombs, the old ogre stores, the Goblin Holes, forgotten streets and the entrances of The Pit, the Undercity is a place begging to be explored (we will provide a partial map in issue 24). Of course such a place does not come without dangers,

the dark tunnels are home to many shady denizens including a goblin tribe, ogre scouts, kultists, thieves, and more.

The Crime Gangs

There are numerous, very competitive gangs in a city the size of Vangre, but add to that the element of kults and the situation becomes explosive. Generally the most powerful kult in Vangre has always been Avida, but Malsano has also grown to be strong. Recently, over the past year, the Kult of Mortigi has grown immensely in influence, seemingly overnight, threatening the established kults, forcing the Church of Baimiopia into action and gaining for the city the attention of the Inquisition. While much of this activity has yet to be seen by the everyday resident of the city, what has been very visible is the violence and skirmishes between rival criminal gangs, often pushed by kultist controllers.

The Mercantile Guild

The Guild is governed by a council that is infested with followers of Avida (issue 15) and will consider anything if it offers a reasonable return. These men have spent years elevating their status and amassing wealth by ways legal, and not. While they are all devoted to Avida, they are most certainly not lacking in common sense and none will risk what they have already gained for any small taking. The head of the guild is Jeunet Pisani, a man who throws himself into his work with great gusto, no matter what it is (current rumour says he *knows* who has kidnapped Anna Heletiano, daughter of Vangre's ruler, the Reganto).

VANGRE'S SAVIOURS

All those valiant adventurers who take part in the defence of Vangre in the two part mini-campaign (this issue and issue 24) can register their names with *Australian Realms*. We in turn will print an Honour Roll in issue 26, those mentioned becoming forever a part of Unae and Vangre's history. To be included on the list please send the names and career/class of your characters and his or her fellows to us by the 6th of October 1995. Mail to: Australian Realms P.O.Box 220 Morley, Western Australia 6943, or through Internet at nicklean@perth.dialix.oz.au.

Several listed adventurers will be chosen to feature in future Unae material, earning your character fame and recognition across all of Unae.

by Malcolm Adler and Colin Taber

It is 515 EK, it is late autumn. ☼

CARD MAGIC

2



FREE

CARD

Summon Card (no casting cost!)

Welcome to Card Magic #2, the *Australian Realms* magazine supplement for players and collectors of collectible trading-cards games. In this issue:

☉ FREE *Magic: The Gathering* card giveaway:

- Fallen Empires, Legends, Rare & Uncommon Revised.

☉☉ Reviews of *Blood Wars*, and the *Magic The Gathering* comics.

☉☉☉ Another Sixty Cards - More Deck Construction Tips for *Magic: The Gathering*.

☉☉☉☉ Spotter's Guide To *Magic Players*, a humorous look at some *Magic: TG* players.

ANOTHER SIXTY CARDS

MORE DECK CONSTRUCTION TIPS FOR MAGIC

by Len Henderson

Hiya, sports fans, your friendly neighbourhood Planeswalker here. Did you try out either of the decks I presented in last issue? How did you get on? Do you feel ready to try some other ideas? Okay, let's get down to some serious deck construction.

THE WEENY HORDES DECK

The definition of a *weeny* for this deck is any creature with a casting cost of 1 (or less). The best colours for playing this deck are green and red. The whole point of the Weeny Hordes deck is to overwhelm your opponent with creatures - he can only defend so many attacks. Thallids make GREAT weenies, so do Goblins. Also green has some other weenies that can be useful. If you invested in some of The Dark, chances are you have lots of goblins, and stuff like Goblin Caves and Shrines. Goblin Warrens are also useful weenies. Ornithopters are great for aerial defence (cannon fodder?) as are Scryb Sprites. Shandoin Dryads are great for Forestwalking your opponent (assuming he is playing green) and ditto for Goblins of the Flarg (Mountainwalking).

Deck Name: Weeny Hordes, Weeny Madness

Number of Cards: 60

Colours: Green/Red

Artifacts: Yes

Expansion sets: Dark, Fallen Empires

Artifacts:

4 Ornithopter

Green:

4 Thallids

4 Scryb Sprites

4 Shandoin Dryads

4 Giant Growth

Red:

4 Goblins of the Flarg

4 Goblin Warrens

4 Goblin Shrine

4 Goblin Balloon Brigade

4 Mon's Goblin Raiders

(or) 4 Goblin Caves

Okay. This deck isn't all that brilliant, but it is very easy to make, and can overwhelm "slow" decks (those decks that take a while to develop in play). Weeny Hordes come into their own in ante games (watch the rare decks scatter), for although they may only win 1 out of 3, chances are you lose a couple of common cards, but win a fairly decent card. Weeny Hordes decks are one of the few decks that I play BIG, with more than 60 cards. Doesn't really matter how big it is, 1 mana of each colour is all you need to get out. While fooling around with this deck, you might want to try out bigger creatures such as Thallid Devourers, Grizzlies and stuff. My hard and fast rule for any card in a Weeny deck is that the majority of creatures *must* playable in the first or second turn.

THE CHESS DECK

Our next deck is called the Chess deck. It is a deck that anyone can make, is quick and easy to play, is medium heavy duty, and is a variant of Magic (still tournament legal, but usually both players play using Chess decks). Making a Chess deck is based on the chess board. Firstly choose two colours (artifacts are considered a colour for the purpose of this deck). From the first colour (say red), choose two sets of four weenies eg. Goblin Balloon Brigade and Kird Ape. These are your eight pawns of red. Next, pick your two biggest walls of that colour eg. Wall of Stone; these are your rooks (castles). Choose two knights and two bishops (have you got the idea yet?) which are medium level creatures (eg. Granite Gargoyle and Hill Giants). Finally, pick your two biggest critters, perhaps a Shivan Dragon and a Rock Hydra, for the king and queen. Now do the same with the other colour. Then, pick 4 creature enchantments from each colour and add them to the now 40 card deck. Add suitable mana, shuffle, and play.

This deck has a major weakness, it can't handle direct attack magic and has no counter ability. However, chances are, you can overwhelm your opponent by sheer weight of numbers. A nice thing about this deck, is that your mana keeps up with the level of creatures you want to cast. You can cast something virtually every turn. Also, instead of putting in creature enchantments, you may, for normal play, put in stuff like Fireballs or Counterspells etc.

Deck Type: Chess

Colours: Any

Artifacts: Sometimes

Expansion sets: Any

Any Colour:

4 Pawn I (1 or less mana to cast)

4 Pawn II (2 or less mana to cast)

2 Castles (Walls)

2 Knights (2 to 4 mana to cast: with special ability)

2 Bishops (3 to 5 mana to cast: special ability optional)

1 King (4-8 mana to cast: with special ability)

1 Queen (the biggest card you've got!)

4 Creature enchantments

This fun theme deck is actually quite viable in play and a good demonstration of the sort of ratio of big to small creatures you should aim for in creature decks. The All-Rounder deck I presented last issue was a creatures deck based on this sort of balance. Aim to have many small, easy to cast creatures plus a fewer large creatures to attack with, and some walls thrown in for defence. Just remember, when playing Magic the Gathering, the little creatures are generally those that are "cannon fodder"; you can be assured that your opponent will always waste some spells on killing them.

But that's OK, that's all part of your wicked plan, and when you've exhausted you opponent's anti-critter spells you can bring out your truly nasty creatures, like your Shivan Dragon etc.

THE STASIS DECK

This deck is for advanced players only. The great problem with the Stasis Deck is having to pay the upkeep. When you don't get an untap phase, you must have a reliable source of mana that can be used every turn. One solution is to use Birds of Paradise enchanted with Instill Energy which will cost you 2 green mana and will give you a constant source of mana. You also need Serra Angels (because they don't tap), and some small creatures that don't cost much to get out. If you can get them, use the common Legend: Zephyr Falcon, and the Antiquity: Yotian Soldier. Rabid Wombat also has this ability, but at \$22 it costs a fair bit to get them. Thallids would be great because they create lots of creatures tapped or not, and don't cost much to get out. Flood from The Dark taps your opponent's creatures, as do Elvish Hunters from the Fallen Empires expansion. You may want to stick in High Tide (also from Fallen Empires) for a source of quick mana. To hamstring your opponent before casting Stasis, chuck in some Mana Shorts. In case your opponent manages to kill your Stasis, you may want to have Winter Orb ready to prevent mana being regained too fast. Finally, throw in some Counterspells, or more amusingly, Power Sinks.

The Stasis deck is a major heavy duty deck. It is the type of deck that wins tournaments. If it has a problem, it is the fact that it is a relatively slow deck, and Birds of Paradise are REALLY easy to kill. Stasis and Instill Energy are also easily disenchanting. Serra Angels are tough to get out in this deck, because you never seem to have enough mana. Also, the deck has no direct attack spells. You may want to consider putting extra mana in this deck, maybe 25m/35s (mana/spell cards). Lean towards the blue mana, with perhaps 2 blue, 1 white and 1 green combinations. Multilands are great. For purposes of keeping the ratio, Tropical should be considered a green mana source, Tundra a white, and Savannah a green or a white land (trust me, this deck needs a lot of blue mana). Any continuous artifacts or enchantments without activation costs are also good. Use low cost spells. The base minimum of this deck is 4 Stasis, 4 Birds of Paradise, and 4 Instill Energy, everything else is optional. An amusing variation is to put in Black Vices and Howling Mines.

Deck Name: Stasis Deck

Colours: Blue/Green/White

Artifacts: Yes

Expansion sets: Fallen Empires, (Legends & Antiquities optional)

Artifacts:

4 Howling Mine	4 Black Vice
(4 Yotian Soldiers)	

Blue:

4 Stasis	(4 Zephyr Falcon)
4 Mana Short	4 Drain Power
4 Power Sink	

White:

4 Serra Angel	4 Healing Potion
---------------	------------------

Green:

4 Instill Energy	4 Birds of Paradise
(4 Rabid Wombat)	

Note that there are more than 10 cards here. That's because many of the cards are optional; mix and match as you like.

SOME QUICK TIPS

Before I go, a quick tip on 'creature instants' and fast effects. When you have creatures like Thallids or artifacts like Basalt Monolith or The Hive, it is a good idea to save them to use at the end of your opponent's turn. For example, if you have a Thallid with 12 counters on it, you could, in your turn, create four 1/1 green creatures but they'll be suffering from summoning sickness and unable to attack until your next turn. If, however, you were to create these creatures as an *instant* at the end of your opponent's turn, they would be over their summoning sickness and available for attacks in *your* turn. Similarly with the Basalt Monolith; assuming you have already tapped your Monolith, and you happen to have 3 mana spare at the end of your opponent's turn, use this mana to untap your Monolith. This allows you to not only have all your mana through your turn, but an untapped Basalt Monolith. Do the same with the Hive, giving yourself a 1/1 wasp, an untapped Hive and all your mana.

There has been a bit of controversy over creature fast effects. Fast effects from creatures, unless specifically called an interrupt on the card, function at the speed of an instant. "So what's your point?", you ask. Instants all happen at the same time, they all come into effect at the same time. Assume my opponent happens to have a 'Tim' (Prodigal Sorcerer) and myself a Royal Assassin. He decides he really doesn't like my Assassin, so he zaps it for 1. My Assassin is dead. However, as an instant, I tap my Royal Assassin to destroy his Tim. BOTH DIE !!! Both fast effects happen in reverse order (ie. the Assassin kills the Tim and then the Tim zaps the Assassin) but as they are both instants, they both happen.

If an instant is cast or used or mana is pumped into a Basalt Monolith etc, and another instant happens, they are resolved in reverse order, but all still take effect. Here is a really ridiculous example: It is the start of my turn. I tap 3 mana to untap my Basalt Monolith. My opponent casts Mana Short which is an instant, and will drain all my mana away. As untapping my Monolith is also an instant, both happen, so my Monolith becomes untapped and I lose all my mana. As an instant, I pump 2 green mana through my Fungal Bloom to give a counter to my Thallid which has 2 already. My opponent casts Lightning Bolt to kill my Thallid, and as an instant I remove three counters to create a 1/1 green creature. He also casts Shatter which threatens to kill my Hive. I pump two mana from my lands as an instant and use 3 from the now untapped Basalt Monolith to create a last 1/1 wasp. In this example SEVEN instants are played in a row. THEY ALL HAPPEN AT THE SAME TIME! This is one of the most difficult concepts to comprehend in Magic. At the end of that spell casting phase, in order, I created a 1/1 Wasp, tapped my Basalt Monolith, lost my Hive, created a 1/1 Saproling, lost my Thallid, stuck a counter on my Thallid, used my Fungal Bloom, lost all my mana and untapped my Basalt Monolith. This is the actual order, for listing purposes and even though I have no mana left, using instants, I achieved a lot. It is as if, on a time line, these instants are all stacked on one point in time.

Finally, the ruling on Pestilence, for those who believe that for every point of mana you pump through Pestilence, you have to pump a point through Circle Of Protection, Black to avoid damage. As Pestilence is B:Effect, it can be 1 point, many sets of points, or one big splash. For example, I pump 1 black mana through my Pestilence. This can be prevented by 1 mana through C.O.P. Black. Secondly I pump 5 mana through my Pestilence. This functions exactly the same as a Fireball. Everyone takes 5 points of damage, and this can be prevented by 1 point of C.O.P. Black. Or, I can pump 5 points through Pestilence separately, and generate five 1 point sets of damage, each one having to be prevented. My choice. But for the Pestilence deck described last issue, 1 point through the C.O.P. Black will prevent the damage from Pestilence.

Anyway, mull that over, and until next time, may the draw be with you. This is your neighbourhood Planeswalker signing off. ■

THE CARD MAGIC SPOTTER'S GUIDE TO MAGIC PLAYERS

by Damian O'Dea

Magic: The Gathering players are a funny lot. Aren't we. In a market spawned from the fields of wargamers and role-players, already known for being weirdoes and geeks, Magic has attracted its fair share of strange folk. As the legion of Magic aficionados grows exponentially with every expansion set, the number of quirky personalities one is likely to encounter has also grown.

To aid you in identifying the sub-species of this ever-growing breed we present here a field guide to Magic players. It is our hope that newcomers to the beloved Deckmaster hobby will be able to use this guide to recognise (and in some cases avoid) the myriad manic mages that are out there waiting to score your ante.

THE COLOUR CLANS

The colour clans are bands of rampaging Magic players who follow a particular colour of magic with a passion. Each new expansion set that emerges from the fetid minds of the Wizard of the Coast design dungeons is feverishly awaited. Each new set brings hope that it will finally provide the clan members with ultimate proof that their colour is supreme. So far, the votes are out, and none have yet found proof of ultimate superiority. The argument and battles that emerge from the colour oriented debates have led to many a heated duel; all fuel to the fires of passion held by the colour clans regarding their greatest spells.

The Evil High Priest: Black is beautiful! Black is the greatest because there are so many evil cards with which to inflict truly gross and icky pain on your opponent. Who cares if it costs an arm and a leg (literally), all your life points, and your kid sister's soul; mangling the opponent, even in to a draw, is enough justification. This Magic player lives for expansions like The Dark.

The Warping Wizard: But blue is better! Blue exists to mess up your day. The Warping Wizard lives for the day she can work out a way to turn all your mana purple! She'll play a spell just for the hoopy effect, and who cares if it doesn't really do anything. Her motto is "Get wet."

The Nature Boy: Green is meaner! Green is critters. Lots of critters. Lots and lots and lots of critters. Nature Boy's deck would probably walk by itself, its got that many damned critters. Worse still, they probably all cost one mana to cast, and nature Boy can play all the land he'll ever need by the end of turn two.

The Mad Bomber: Red makes ya dead! And that's what the Mad Bomber loves to see happen. How? Destructoes. Only destructoes. And nothing but destructoes. If he won a creature in ante, the Mad Bomber would probably forget to attack with it, if he even bothered to put it into play. All that counts are the things go BOOM!!!

The Holy Terror: White is might, and might makes right! But that doesn't stop the Holy Terror living behind a battery of healing and protection spells and blowing raspberries at you. And they're all holding hands 'cos the Holy Terror's critters all band like crazy. Those that don't get Helm of Chatzduk'd until they can't move without the say so of something else. One would almost think them a little too friendly with each other. Makes you wonder really...

THE MERCHANTS

While there are many types of merchants around, trading anything under the million suns of Dominia for a piece of coloured card, here are but a few of the more common types you are likely to encounter. One thing they all have in common, they live to trade.

Common or Goodies Merchants: These will trade anything, anytime, anywhere. In the middle of a game, the merchant stops to trade, usually out of his play deck (into which the trade vanishes)!. Goodies Merchants may trade in their sleep, if they sleep at all. This type can be seen on street corners wearing long overcoats and should never be approached while holding Magic cards.

Gloater: The Gloater derives almost (but not quite) as much pleasure talking trades as making them. They are ever ready to regale you with war stories about how they managed to trade a Blue Mox for a couple of Islands, or something equally as ridiculous. Four Rares for a Lightning Bolt? Word of Command for a mere Preacher, Armageddon and Balance? We should all be so lucky.

Wall Street Merchant: This merchant has a global marketplace. The Wall Street Merchant deals in cards for dozens of people, knows who's got what and for how much. She bought a mobile phone from the profits she made in card dealing and makes more money with it. The Wall Street Merchant seriously considers buying all the stock of the next expansion set, sitting on it for a few months and making a fortune.

THE PALLID ONES

There are those among us that display a unique perverseness. The Pallid Ones are wan and unhealthy creatures who rarely see the light of day, and shrink from it when they do. Such creatures can always be found haunting their chosen game retail store, dully shuffling their play decks from opening until closing time. These lifeless wizards are often considered to be poorly animated shop displays by blissfully unenlightened passersby.

Mr Unconstructed Deck: "Sure, I'll play" says Mr Unconstructed Deck, and proceeds to pull out half a dozen randomly sorted boxes of cards. Two hours later, he finally has his deck ready, by which time his opponent has probably wandered off or died of boredom. Either way, Mr Unconstructed Deck wins by default. "I've never lost a game with this deck."

"Call Me Beth": This magic player knows and can quote, word for word, both the Unlimited and Revised Starter Deck rules, the Magic Pocket Players Guide, the Duellist errata and D'Angelo's Card Ruling Summaries. "Call Me Beth" lives for the moment of glory when asked to adjudicate a disputed sequence of play. "Call Me Beth" can be summoned in an instant by waving a Legends expansion rule insert card in the air.

The Brick: This wizard plays with every card she possesses. This means a five-colour megalith that takes three hours to shuffle and three days to deplete! If you rely on Millstones, forget it! If you're

looking for assistance in a team multi player game, forget it! The fact that they get the right mana to cast a spell is pure coincidence...

The Immovable Object: The Immovable Object is "blessed" with a collection encompassing every card ever printed, in multiples! Worse still, he knows how to use them. Some call him "Mr Suitcase". This three times tournament champion represents the ultimate challenge to an aspiring Magic player, but beware! Just when you've perfected the ultimate "Irresistible Force" deck to beat him, he whips your arse with something new he threw together on a whim.

THE WORST OF A BAD LOT

Perhaps you recognise someone you know amongst the sad creatures listed above. Worse still, perhaps you recognise yourself! Fear not, for such aberrant beings are only minor deviants compared with the lowborn critters about to be described.

Mr Safe Decks: Magic with a condom. This twisted soul seeks to protect his cards from any or all nicks, scratches, dents, marks and mutilations. Mr Safe Deck's cards are sealed away in Mylor sleeves, and must NEVER be riffled, even shuffling is beyond consideration! Mr Safe Decks cannot be traded with; he'll knock back a Black Lotus because it's only Near Mint.

The Lucky Bastard: Magic, like life, can go for or against you. The Lucky Bastard is one for whom it all inevitably falls into place. He's the guy that pulls the god-boosters from a fresh display box, has enough cash on hand to buy the lot, and then triples his money in an hour with a snap Rares sale. Then he trades the remaining cards out for 20 Lightning Bolts to build a funky deck... 'cos he can.

The Funky Deck Builder: Silly Decks are what it's all about for this Magic player. Sure, a carefully constructed killer deck may consistently win, but how much fun is that? What's fun is making the other player wonder what the hell goes on inside your head when you're *not* playing Magic! Who cares if it takes a 15 card combo for it to work, or costs several thousand dollars to build? What counts is having a funky deck that amuses and abuses. Tournament legality is a minor concern!

The Caffeine Fiend: Don't be fooled by this player. He doesn't play Magic to win. He doesn't even play Magic for social reasons. He plays Magic because it means when his hands start shaking from too much caffeine, or worse, not enough, he can pick up a pack of cards and appear to be shuffling them. This makes him almost socially acceptable. At least, these days, people don't back away until after he starts throwing fits.

Pass me that bottle of Jolt Cola.

So there you have it, the official Card Magic Spotter's Guide to Magic Players. Carry it with you always and you'll avoid a lot of trouble. And remember, there is always somebody worse afflicted than you... just check out the Star Trek: TNG players! ■

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STACKING THEM UP

- Reviews



BLOOD WARS

Collectible Card Game
Published by TSR Inc.
Reviewed by Wesley Brooks

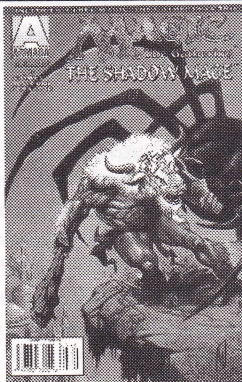
TSR's second venture into the collectible card game market, **Blood Wars**, faces a lot of competition. Some of my friends were buying it so I gave it a shot. Packed in two decks of 50 random cards the Starter Packs are great value while the Boosters at 15 cards each are pretty standard. Grabbing my first starter, adorned with Our Lady of Pain (the ruler of Sigil, possibly the most important city among all the Planes), I began sorting through the cards and boy, was I impressed. The artwork sold me straight away. It has this really gritty feel, which gives the game a feel of tough battles won and lost. Check out the Succubus.

Sort through the cards - all the symbols and names - Warlords, Legions, Fate, little storm clouds, swords and things. Time for the rules. The Rule Book itself is full gloss and colour, a nice look. The basic premise behind the game is the political and martial control of strategic locations throughout all the Planes. Your Warlords provide both political cunning through intrigue and leadership of your Legions in combat. You can use strategy to win control of your Battlefields, but if you don't like to leave anything to chance, you can also stack Fate in your favour with such things as spells and artifacts. Each Battlefield gives you Victory points, which you can use to win the game by reaching a total that the players agree upon before the game begins.

After having played a few games though it is easy to see that Blood Wars is designed as a multi-player game. In fact, we have run into a couple of problems playing two-player games. Once one player gets a Warlord that has a *Denial* power, such as forcing the opponent's Warlord out of the conflict, you are pretty much guaranteed of a win for each Battlefield you challenge for. This problem is only really overcome with more players. There are also some completely powerful Fate card combinations as well, one of which made a friend of mine all but invulnerable.

Once I started to get into the cards and began to explore them it was distressing to discover that some cards just seemed to be missing from the basic set. These cards were not just missing but seemed integral to many of the Warlords and Battlefields already present. After discovering that TSR had already planned the first 3 expansions for the game before it was released, I once again felt the sting of big Corp marketing.

Overall I enjoyed playing Blood Wars but I will not be buying more than one or two boosters from each expansion as I am already very happy with my play deck. Like most other card games everyone playing needs a deck of their own, but the Starters already provide enough to design a play deck using the formulas supplied in the Rule Book. It therefore seems to lack the thrill of deck experimentation so closely associated with M:TG. All that said though - certainly give it a look, it really is fun.



SHADOW MAGE & ICE AGE

Magic the Gathering Comics
Published by Armada
Reviewed by Chris Johnson

One of the latest offerings in "Support Industries" (See What's New in Duelist #3) for Magic the Gathering is a line of comics by Armada, published under the Acclaim flag. The first two of these comics arrived on the shelf recently and, being a true Tragic the Victim, I parted with some of my hard earned cash to see what these comics had to offer.

Before I even read either comic I extracted the free Magic card from inside. From *The Shadow Mage* came a rather dull fireball, however on closer inspection it proved to be a newer, (re)revised card, though I have heard that the fourth edition will be different again. From *Ice Age* came an Ice Ages promo card, called Bone Shaman, a 3/3 red giant that can stop a creature from regenerating (under certain conditions). Once I had got past the cards I sat down to read the comics.

The Shadow Mage: To start with, I would have to say I was disappointed by the comic as a whole. The main let down was the writing. It came across as a competition to see how many card references the writer could jam onto one page. Generally the story was very juvenile, trying unsuccessfully to capture the gameplay, while offering nothing original in the plot. The plot goes something like this; Baddy kills good central character's father in opening battle, faithful retainer saves child, rears child in secrecy until baddy sends someone to kill them. The artwork was marginally better, above average for comics, but way below the quality of art most Magic players have grown to love on their cards. I also found some of the fancier writing hard to read, not helping with the flimsy plot.

Ice Age: This one was better, with more to offer in the way of an original plot. The comic tells the story of a small city of people slowly being pushed out of their homes by the encroaching ice. This impending doom causes friction in the city as Council members debate their course of action. The artwork though was quite similar in style and quality as *The Shadow Mage*. Even so, as comics go this is not an outstanding production.

At the back of both comics is a blow by blow account of the spells used in the story, somehow detracting even further from the comic. This analysis cements my belief that these comics take themselves far too seriously. Perhaps this means they would better suit a player who would willingly play a lightning bolt deck because "It would win every time", more than it would suit the sort of player that likes to come up with theme decks, or try odd card combinations.

One promising thing is a little promotional piece at the back of *Ice Age* previewing *Fallen Empires* #1. It shows a cover by Anson Maddocks. Hopefully more Magic artists can be enlisted for covers or something on the whole Magic line.

In conclusion I would have to say that I would rather see a Magic comic done by Magic artists. Both Phil Foglio and Quinton Hoover have done comics and I think that either of them would be able to produce something better than these without much effort at all. If nothing else, at least let Phil *write* the story, anyone but the current writer. However, I will be continuing to purchase these comics, and the *Fallen Empires* one on the way, because they will probably be collectors items, and they do come with free cards. They also have that promising potential pool of artists to rope in for special pics.

The Sharp End!

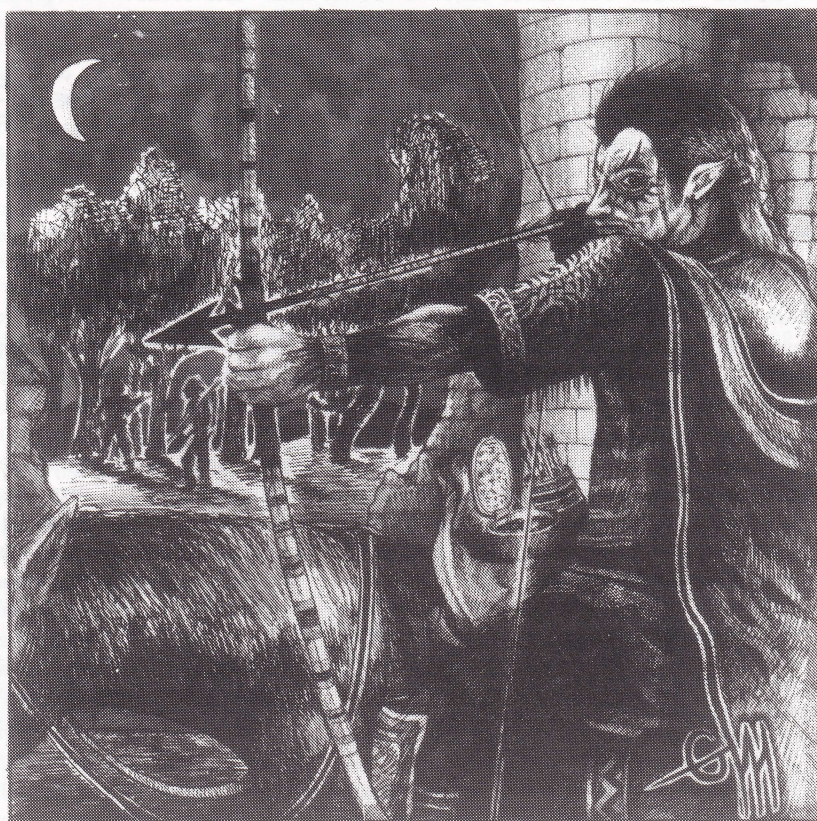
Imaginative & Effective Ways of Dealing Death at a Distance

By Bill McConnell

Most role playing game systems present several kinds of bows for aspiring archers to choose from but few elaborate on the kinds of arrows available for each bow type. Combat systems often overlook the fact that in archery it is the arrow that actually does the damage, not the bow. Most rules for archery combat therefore tend to revolve around the type of bow used to calculate range and injury, whereas in reality the actual injury inflicted on the target will depend far more on the kind of arrowhead used.

The enormous hitting power of a longbow is not only due to its high draw poundage but more to the fact that it is able to hurl a heavy arrow. The hitting power of the arrow is a product of the velocity and mass of the projectile at the time of impact. A bow that has a high draw poundage (like a crossbow) may only be able to shoot a light arrow where a larger bow (like the longbow) may not have the same draw weight but can shoot a much heavier missile. The true damage inflicted by an arrow is directly related to its momentum (Mass times Velocity) and the shape of the arrow head.

Archeological evidence shows the existence of many different kinds of arrow heads - some designs certainly were a product of available technology or the desire to standardise or mass produce, but there also exist in the historical record many arrowheads designed for specific tasks like armour piercing, flesh cutting, rope slicing, fishing, bird hunting etc. A recent magazine article (see bibliography below) described how a group of re-enactors in England tested Roman period armour and shields against contemporary arrows. The results showed (among other things) that the German enemies of Rome had developed some rather nasty and effective arrowheads to combat the armoured Romans. Another example is provided by Marco Polo, who, in recounting the stories of his travels, spends much time describing how the Tartars waged war. They fought almost exclusively on horseback using bows; only drawing a melee weapon when they had no arrows left. When the Tartars first approached each other in battle they let fly with light, swift arrows to wound each other, but when they got close enough they preferred to use heavy shafted arrows to punch through armour and wound deeply.

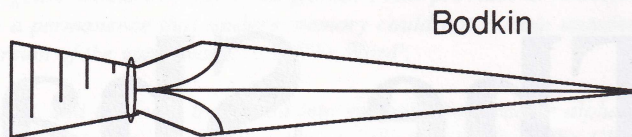


The Player/Archer who wishes to find a good fletcher and pay a little extra for his arrows should be able to select specific shafts and flights for his arrows as well to improve accuracy, range or hitting power. Below are some guidelines to allow players and GMs' alike to customise their arrows and introduce a little bit more variety into the way archery may be used. In terms of suggested combat bonuses/damage modifiers, both six-sided and percentile-based role playing systems have been catered for.

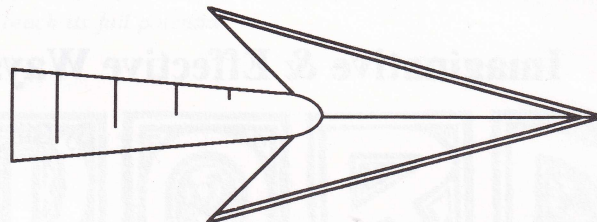
Arrow Heads

The business end of the arrow is the bit that does the damage and surprisingly a large number of variations exist. Historically speaking most advanced warrior cultures were not content to use a single kind of arrow head. Romans, Vikings, Germans and Oriental warriors (and many others) always had a choice of arrows and arrow heads depending on the needs of the moment. What follows is a summary of actual arrow heads found on the archaeological record and some educated speculation on their purposes.

Bodkin: Sometimes referred to as the long bodkin, this is an armour piercing point and the most common arrowhead used in large scale warfare. The bodkin's long, pointed head helps it penetrate most forms of armour although, surprisingly, it is not very effective against leather. A bodkin point will easily pierce mail or rigid plate 1-2mm but the fibres in heavy leather are able to snare the arrow head and reduce penetration. This kind of arrow head delivers a puncture wound which in itself is not as serious as say a slashing wound (with lots of internal bleeding) but before the turn of the century a body wound of this kind was eventually fatal (due to infection and all that). This is definitely the kind of arrowhead to use against heavily armoured opponents. To simulate the armour penetration a GM could allow arrows fitted with a bodkin point to do an extra 2 points/20% of damage against armoured opponents but the damage is reduced by 2 points/20% against targets without armour, or wearing only leather armour.



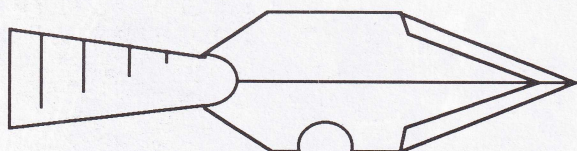
Bodkin



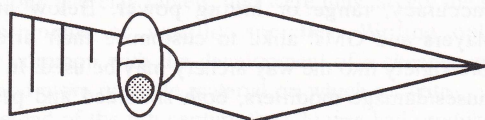
Broadheads

Broad head: Sometimes called a "bowel-raker" this broad sharp head is excellent for slicing through flesh or leather but has trouble penetrating heavier armour. The slashing effects of this arrow head guarantees lots of bloodshed and tissue damage, however even light mail can seriously reduce its effectiveness. Use this arrowhead when trying to nail unarmoured foes or animals (monsters?). Add 2 points/20% of damage when shooting unarmoured opponents or those protected by leather only; reduce damage by 2 points/20% if the target is wearing heavier armour.

Whistling Arrow: Occasionally used by Oriental warriors, these arrow heads emit a high pitched whistle during flight. Some heads are hollow with carefully positioned holes drilled into the side and others have carved bone or wood whistlers mounted just behind the point. These arrows can be used for signalling, frightening beasts or demoralising opponents. Although these arrow points do no extra damage they can be used to scare off horses, distract sentries or help make an impressive entrance.



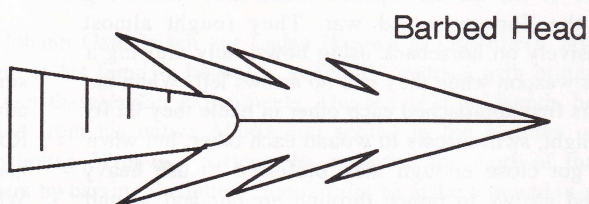
Whistlers



Barbed head: Used by several cultures as for fishing this kind of arrow-head has barbs down its length that make it very difficult to remove from a wound. The head does no extra damage but a successful wound means the arrow is lodged in the target and will do an extra 1d3/+10% of damage when removed unless suitable first aid or healing is available. Damage cannot be healed until the arrow head is removed. These arrow heads (along with fine rope tied to the arrow shaft) could be used to relieve merchants of pouches and other valuables when employed by roof top archers. Lots of possibilities for adventurous bowmen (and bow-women).

Fire arrows: Used effectively in wartime even up to the time of Henry VIII when guns were well and truly in fashion, firearrows take various forms. It is actually hard to keep an arrow burning in flight, especially when using a crossbow bolt which travels at very high speed. Arrows wrapped in cloth and soaked in flammable oils and resins can work but purpose built fire-arrows are more reliable. I could not find any descriptions of historical fire-arrows but I would guess that the more reliable ones would actually have small wire cages to contain the flammables. In my mind fire-arrow heads are small steel cages with a point on the front. Flammable material (cloth soaked in pitch, wax or naphtha) is held in the cage to ensure that the arrow does not extinguish itself in flight. Upon impact the cage can collapse to help spread the flammable contents. In game mechanics we could say that the arrow does half normal damage if fired at a target but has a chance equal to the archers luck/agility roll (eg POW x 5% or similar) of setting a flammable target on fire. A burning target could take a minimum of 1d6/+10-30% damage for 1d6 rounds and possibly more depending on the presence of combustibles to keep the fire going.

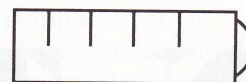
Silver/gold head: In worlds populated by magic beasts it is often thought that arrows coated with gold or silver may improve the chances of killing such unnatural creatures. These arrow-heads may allow the poor mortal archer a small chance of surviving an encounter with the odd demon or two (then again it might not). The truly paranoid/careful archer should have a couple of these arrows just in case. The effect of these arrow heads will vary from allowing the non-magical weapon to damage a magical creature or doing up to double damage according to the whims and vagaries of the GM. Basically these arrow heads should prove to be better than nothing.



Barbed Head

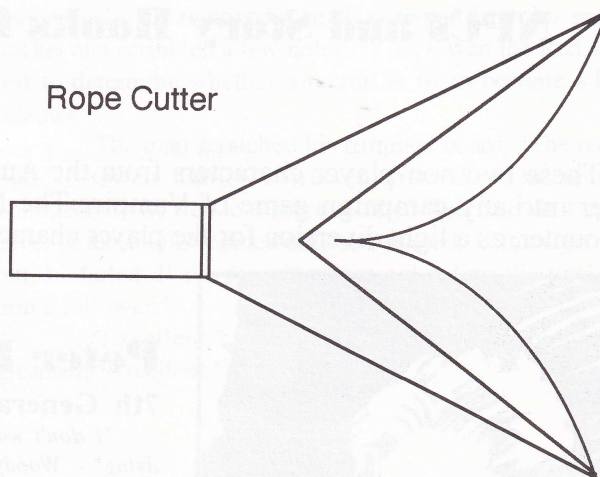
Blunt: This arrow head has no point just a blunt head or metal button. Blunts were often used when hunting birds and can be employed whenever it is desirable not to kill a target. They should do half normal damage against any target and the GM may allow an archer to aim for an opponent's head (without a helmet on) in which case a successful hit may stun the opponent if the hit points for the head are exceeded. Note that damage from blunts should be very transient and heal at about 1 point/wound per game hour.

Blunt



Rope cutter: although mainly employed by Oriental archers, a Viking arrow-head has been excavated that would easily fall into this category. A rope cutter has wide sweeping blades on the front to increase the chance of cutting rope or rigging. Normally shooting at a small target like a rope should require some kind of critical success to hit. An arrow fitted with this kind of head should have an increased chance to hit a rope (or equivalent) and so the archer may only need to roll under half their skill to hit. This head will do an extra 2 points/20% damage against ropelike targets but if fired at any other target should do 2 points/20% less since the damage would be more superficial than penetrating.

Rope Cutter



Shafts

Quality: Arrow shafts often vary in quality, and the archer willing to pay extra for high quality will get a bonus to hit. Shafts that are straighter and made of better wood will fly better. Normally add +1/10% chance to hit when using good quality shafts.

Heavy shafts: Heavy shafts are useful when the arrows are to be used at short or point blank range. A heavy shaft will do 1 extra point/10% of damage but the base range is reduced to 1/3 normal.

Light shafts: Light shafts increase the base range of an arrow by 1/3 although the hitting power is reduced by 1 point/10%.

Flights

Quality: For the player willing to pay for good quality flights the accuracy of the arrow will be increased allowing an extra +1/10% to be added to the chance to hit.

Cost

Most game systems will give you the cost of an average arrow. Each customization should cost double the base price so an arrow fitted with a specialised point (like a bodkin) point will cost double whereas an arrow with a specialised head, a high quality heavy shaft and quality flights would cost 8 x base price. The GM may decide to make these custom arrows more or less expensive.

Availability

Most arrow makers (Fletchers) are able to produce all the custom changes mentioned above although currently held stocks are variable. With a little imagination you or your GM could easily work up some other arrow designs that have no basis in fact at all but would be enjoyable to have in a game. The idea is to add colour and variety; arrow customizations should balance a small advantage (no Armageddon- 44 magnum- ultrashock arrows please) with some cost like limited range, reduced accuracy, higher cost etc. Above all, remember game balance and try to make any modifications to the standard archery rules a welcome addition to your game.

Roleplaying Applications

There are many ways to introduce exotic arrows to a campaign. Whilst exploring an ancient burial mound your players discover a quiver of rope-cutters or blunts in a noble warrior's grave goods. They'd have to spend time researching these strange-looking arrowheads before being able to use them properly. They might observe the murals painted on the walls of the tomb showing the warrior assaulting a ship's rigging, or him out hunting partridge with the blunts. Otherwise players could seek advice from a master fletcher or go to a library that stocks ancient military books.

Bodkins might be used by faerie archers and players could be the stung victims of these nasty piercers. Or your players could be enlisted to help repel the steppe barbarian hordes and encounter the fear-inspiring whistlers.

Whenever players encounter new technologies they have a great opportunity to gain a tactical advantage over their future foes, or they might want to simply make money from their discoveries by trading on their newfound knowledge.

Further reading:

Military Illustrated Magazine, July 1994 Number 74 pp 36-39.

David Nicolle, *Saracen Faris 1050-1250 AD*, 1994: Osprey London, centre artwork.

Terrence Wise, *Saxon, Viking and Norman*, 1979: Osprey London, pg 27.

I Bottomly and A.P. Hopson, *Arms and Armour of the Samurai*, 1988: Bison Books, pp 26 - 27. ■

VAMPIRES ON THE RUN

NPCs and Story Hooks for Vampire by Tonia Walden

These two non-player characters from the Australian Realms "ROGUE's GALLERY" could conceivably enter into any campaign game of Vampire: The Masquerade™. They could either act as a chance eccentric encounter, as a light diversion for the player characters, or be used to launch part of a larger plot.



Peter Heduke

7th Generation Malkavian

"I don't want to achieve immortality through my work - I want to achieve it by not dying" - Woody Allen

Nature: Fanatic **Demeanour:** Plotter

STR: 2 **DEX:** 2 **STA:** 2 **CHA:** 4 **MAN:** 3 **APP:** 3 **PER:** 4 **INT:** 4 **WITS:** 4

Acting (mimic) 4, Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Cooking 3, Dodge 2, Empathy 4, Intimidation 3, Leadership 2, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 3, Drive 3, Etiquette 2, Fast Talk 3, Firearms 3, Melee 3, Music 2, Security 2, Stealth 4, Bureaucracy 4, Computer 3, Investigation 3, Law 3, Medicine 2, Occult (spurious) 4, Politics 4, Research 4, Science 2 **Auspex** 4, **Obfuscate** 3, **Dominate** 3, **Presence** 3

Virtues depend on Peters state of mind at the time.

Humanity: 8 **Willpower:** 7 **Apparent age:** 41 **Hgt:** 6'4"

Peter is a documentary maker whose films used to be quite respected in art circles in the American Camarilla cities. He was embraced in England at the turn of the century, but soon after moved to America and fell in love with the emerging craft of film making. After the first flickering silent movie he saw in a darkened theatre one night, it became his all-consuming passion. Surprisingly, he has become an adept director through years of experience. This has annoyed more than a few of the Toreador kindred who see him as a Malkavian infiltrator. However, these are usually jealous Kindred of the "poseur" faction - the real "artists" insist that making movies simply by filming real life (no matter how bizarre) is not true art at all. Peter doesn't care, but he has been the topic of some debate at "art house" movie nights.

Peter believes in "method" documentary making where he immerses himself thoroughly into the subject in order to learn about it. He is an excellent pupil and mimic and usually ends up annoying the people he interviews in his films when they find their mannerisms being mimicked, and their knowledge outstripped, because of Peter's previous intensive study.

This "obsession" with his topics is actually part of Peter's madness and his behaviour patterns depend on what topic he is filming - if it is something mundane, like architecture, he will be completely lucid. However, when he was making a movie on "Politics - Debate and Debacle" he actually became physically involved in Kindred politics in Denver and rose in power and standing in the Camarilla ranks. Unfortunately, he made a later movie, "Magic Bullets and the Gnomes of Zurich - Modern conspiracy theory and its power over a nation". During the making of this film, he suffered acute paranoia and thought that other members of the Prince's coterie were out to depose and kill him. He assaulted the Prince's haven in revenge, involving a breach of the Masquerade, and then fled, with a bloodhunt on him.

He has now become something of a wanderer, as the Camarilla have black banned him from their cities (though his movies are still shown in art house circles in Europe and in the Anarch and Sabbat cities such as New York and the West Coast). Peter has taken to travelling overseas and is always on the look out for a new topic to immerse himself in. He travels with a ghoul assistant, who looks after his monetary and accommodation needs.

Story Ideas

If one of the members of the campaign is an expert on a particular topic, this could be the subject of Peter's next film, making the character of interest to him. He could approach the character, who probably will not trust Peter's motives, but Peter will continue to pester them to become involved in his latest project.

Peter could have taken some film of an event that would embarrass/incriminate the characters and they may have to get it back off him. Peter is not usually violent and the characters could probably bargain with him to get the film negatives rather than have to fight him for it. This could involve a favour or task the characters would owe him.

One of the characters may discover that Peter has a good deal of information about a topic that they are interested in - they may try to find him, and may incur the displeasure of one of Peter's enemies by doing so.

Simone Demerci

10th Generation Toreador

"All art is at once surface and symbol - those who go beneath the surface do so at their peril"

- Oscar Wilde

Nature: Rebel **Demeanour:** Perfectionist

STR: 2 **DEX:** 4 **STA:** 2 **CHA:** 3 **MAN:** 3 **APP:** 4 **PER:** 3 **INT:** 4 **WITS:** 3

Artistic Expression (tattoo) 5, Acting 2, Athletics 3 Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Empathy 2, Leadership 2, Lockpicking 2, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 3, Drive 2, Etiquette 2, Firearms 4, Linguistics (French) 1, Melee 3, Music 2, Repair 3, Seduction 3, Stealth 3, Occult (symbols) 4

Auspex 3, **Celerity** 3, **Presence** 3, **Thaumaturgy - rituals** 2

Conscience 2, **Self-Control** 3, **Courage** 3

Humanity: 6 **Willpower:** 8 **Apparent age:** 25 **Hgt:** 6'1"

Simone was born in Canada but hitch-hiked her way out of there as soon as she was old enough to leave. She managed to make her way to New York, and lived in the arty district of Greenwich Village for some years. It was there she met her lover Paul Guillame and from him she learnt about symbolism and the significance of tattooing as a form of power in primitive cultures. Paul convinced Simone to have almost all her body decorated in wards and symbols of various mystic significance. They decided to explore some of the cultures they were interested in and made backpacking trips to South America and Europe, seeking out ancient artworks. In France they met with a man who seemed to know a lot about the hidden meanings of the old carvings and designs that they were studying. Fascinated, he became their mentor, and they spent endless hours of discussion with him. He was in fact a Vampire and eventually became entranced with Simone and embraced her one night.

Simone was horrified by the change and could not face Paul again, fearful she would attack him. She eventually discovered the Camarilla and its politics and realised that magic was quite real and tangible. She sought out one young member of the Tremere and entranced him, so he could aid her in her studies. She had decided that she would try to induce actual working wards in the patterns she injects into human skin - she was hoping to find a way to tattoo kindred as well, but had so far been unsuccessful, though she had quite a few volunteers to help. When the Tremere's sire found out what she was up to, he was furious that she was interfering with Tremere magics and he convinced the Prince she was threat and had her blood hunted.

Undecided as to where to go now, she has taken again to travelling to ancient sites and researching symbolism, noting down details and sketches in the leather bound notebooks that she always takes with her. She travels in the company of two ghouls who have half body tattoo decoration - Simone thinks of them as her works of art and they are entranced and blood bound to her, so do as she wills.

Story Ideas

When the players meet Simone she could be distraught and need their help. She was incapacitated and made to watch as her ghouls were killed in front of her - she has suffered a derangement seeing them destroyed in that way, (more the fact that they were her art, rather than their actual deaths). She will try to enlist the characters aid, by fair means or foul to get revenge on the people responsible. (Possibly the Tremere or her own Sire, who is angry at her having fled before he could blood bind her to him)

If one of the characters has a high appearance, Simone could become entranced with him and try to convince him to become her next objet d'art. This could involve her using presence on him or simply seduction.

Simone could have succeeded in her quest to mix install magic into her designs and has perfected a ward against a certain type of being (lupines, magi, fairies). One of the party characters could find out about this and it may be just what they have been looking for, as they have an enemy that the ward would be useful against.



"Tea, Earl Grey, hot."

The guys in the row in front of us are chain-sucking reefer and taking hits from a flask. By the time *The Cruel Sea* finish their set and *The Stones* finally come on the smokers are pretty wasted. I'm feeling strange. There are yuppies and old people everywhere. But man, what a show! Corporate Rock, Nineties style. There are hot dog boys and ice-cream girls working the crowd, there is EFTPOS in the T-shirt tent, there are hordes of security people and hordes of beautiful people. There are men with beer guts inside expensive polo-shirts, women with perfect hair and darling little earrings. slackers in torn jeans and messy hair, old guys with no hair left and Bikers with bad attitudes. So many people. The stage is so far away Mick and Keith are tiny rock'n'roll mice, but its okay we can see them REAL BIG on the video screens. The effects are so cool you don't care that the band are practically invisible. The music is great, Mick singing "Angie" is worth the hundred bucks all by itself. It gives me gooseflesh. I'm glad I came. It's not a concert. No sir. This is a Multimedia event. But it ain't a concert. Still, it's great. At times like this I think weird things like, "What would Mozart have made of all this?"

"Warp factor seven, Mr Sulu."

OK I confess. The reason I didn't read many books for review this issue can be laid at the feet (albeit decomposing feet) of Gene Roddenberry. Those fiendish bastard TV Program Directors haven't helped either. What can you do? The Original Series Mondays and Wednesdays (and I bloody well am taking an hour off to watch it tonight, Boyo!), The Next Generation on Tuesdays and DS9 on Thursday. WHEN AM I SUPPOSED TO BLOODY READ, GUYS? I mean, I like to do other stuff, don't I? I don't have to read every goddamned night *Star Trek* is not on do I? Give me a bloody break. And then there's movies to see as well. A reviewers life can be hell let me tell you!

"He's dead Jim!"

So I went to see *STARGATE*. Why, I ask myself. Oh I know people liked it, the masses liked it, people who don't know Science Fiction liked it, the sort of people who join weird cults and make Sarin in the basement probably. Sure James Spader was cute as a teddy bear, but I can watch the *Care Bears* on TV if I want cute. When I go to a movie called *STARGATE* I want a genuine honest-to-god bloody science fiction epic. I want a stargate that goes somewhere! I want real Space Marines and not a bunch of wimpy wash-outs that couldn't hit the side of a pyramid with a ghetto blaster. I want a believable alien culture, something strange and mysterious with motives beyond the ken

The Analytical Engine

by Peter Crank

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of man, not a bunch of comic knock-about pseudo-Egyptian stooges that made me want to PUKE! I just don't get it. I saw stuff in *STARGATE* I hadn't seen since the Late Late Show, and by god it might have been half-original then but not forty years on. The dunes lined with cheering hordes; PUKE! Brilliant scientist learns a 5000 years old dialect of an already 5000 years dead language in one sitting from a cardboard bimbo; PUKE! Do I sound angry? I am actually. Some bunch of half-wit screen writers were commissioned by a bunch of brain-dead producers to write a piece of crap which was populated by a bunch of cardboard bloody characters played by actors who didn't seem to give a hoot. ENOUGH ALREADY.

You know, when I first caught a whisper that *STARGATE* was in the pipe I actually was foolish enough to think that Hollywood would be smart and brave enough to produce Fredrick Pohl's absolutely brilliant and ground-breaking novel of the same name. I am wiser but sadder. Some day it might happen. Someday someone will produce a great science fiction movie to rival Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey. Don't get me wrong, I don't want another mystical Chinese puzzle of a movie necessarily, but I do want a movie that doesn't violate half a dozen well-known physical laws in the first reel (*Star Wars* is a perfect example of this with starships doing barrel-rolls and loop-the-loops in deep space - if you don't know what's wrong with that then you need to go back to basics. Ditto on the big rumbling noises as the Battle Cruiser goes by - ITS A VACUUM! THERE IS NO NOISE, YOU MORONS!), I want a movie that challenges my intellect, a movie that has great characterisation, a great story, a sense of wonder and fine acting. *Blade Runner* is such a movie, but flawed by a lack of courage. *Alien* and *Aliens* are good, especially the former (Ridley Scott again), but what I want is the Pulp Fiction of science fiction, or even, dammit, the *Forrest Gump*.

"I know this ship like the back of my hand".

I don't know if I have the heart to subject myself to *The Puppet Masters*. Those of

you that know the classic Heinlein novel may well share my fear. Sure it's dated, but so is Tolstoy and Hemingway. Its a bloody good story though and I commend it to you. Read it before you go to see the movie and together we can tremble in hyper-acidic anticipation.

"I'm a doctor, not a mechanic."

There's a lot that's wrong with the original series of *Star Trek* but that has more to do with the times than any inherent lack of value (and maybe the fact that Roddenberry seemed to be sleeping with half the cast). Sure the special effects are pitiful, but at the time they were state-of-the-art for TV - the Gorn captain in the episode "Arena" (TOS episode 19) shown tonight my-time is a fine example of tacky, but at least he is a non-human alien. (Do have a read of Frederic Browne's original short story of the same name which was adapted by Gene L. Coon for the series; its a cracker!).

By Nineties' standards the women in ST/TOS are treated as decoration and have no roles of substance. I know Michelle Nichols made a big noise about being an important role model for women but watch her during these early episodes: they have her screaming shrilly, holding her arms up in melodramatic poses and singing really awful Roddenberry space/love songs (with Spock as accompanist on Vulcan harp!) - and what is she but a sub-space telephonist? Certainly not what I'd call a meaty role with significance to women. status quo I'd call it. And Jimmy always has a blonde bimbo/yeoman standing at his shoulder ready to clutch him in fear when the alien thingies come calling or to give him a back rub. (Did you see that episode? "Shore Leave" TOS episode 17 - a very silly episode). What I do like is Keptin Kirk's extremely feisty nature. In "Arena" Jim wants to snuff out the Gorn ship and crew and gives the Vulcan a mouthful of sarcastic abuse when Spock suggests a more conciliatory approach. Love it! Death to aliens! This tension largely disappeared in later series and is absent altogether from the movies though Kirk retains a healthy hatred for Klingons right up to STVI. (I love Klingons, I have to say it, they are sexy as hell, especially female Klingons.)

"Most illogical."

Klingons aside, the makeup - even in ST:TNG and DS9 - is really bad, funny bad; but that's because the state-of-the-art in *Star Trek* these days is funny noses and bumpy foreheads. It's not technically bad but conceptually bankrupt. *Babylon Five* is the only show with a decent alien but even there you get leopard skin heads and those bumpy noses again and anyway the show isn't that great. Is it too much to ask that some effort be put into alien creation? The Borg were

cool; motives unknown, origins unknown, dangerous and seemingly unstoppable - and what did they do? Give them bloody emotions straight out of Middle America (courtesy of Data's evil twin Lore with a little help from a Borg named Hugh - what is it with this evil twin business? Everybody gets an evil twin on American TV. I don't have an evil twin, do you? Am I missing out on something?). Can we please have aliens who don't speak idiomatic American? Can we have aliens that are incapable of breeding with Homo Sap? In fact, can we have aliens that don't look at all like Homo Saps with bad acne scars? (OK, so Mick Fleetwood did a great sardine alien - Manhunt TNG episode 45 - but its still rare to see alien aliens). Is that too much to ask?

In the Sixties, when Star Trek was conceived, there was a label for the kind of thing that Star Trek is and was and what most film and video Speculative Fiction is and probably will continue to be. It was called Science Fantasy, boys and girls. The term's origins are unimportant, suffice it to say that in the Golden Age of Sci-Fi (and woe unto you if you called it Sci-Fi in those dark days) the engineers and rocket scientists who read and wrote much of the speculative fiction of the day were sticklers for detail. Fiction based on solid extrapolation in science was Science Fiction, stuff with no science in it was Fantasy and the stuff in between was

Science Fantasy. If you read the magazines of the era (and there were heaps - Galaxy, Astounding/Analog, Amazing, The Magazine Of Fantasy & Science Fiction, If and scores of minor mags) the tone was contemptuous, an "Its only Science Fantasy, but a good read despite that" sort of thing. I don't agree with the tone, but the label deserves reviving. Lets stop calling Star Trek, Star Wars, Cocoon and all the rest Sci-Fi, lets call them Science Fantasies - 'cause that's what they are.

Star Trek: Generations (star date: 48632.1) is a great Science Fantasy. I'd call it the best Trek movie so far. The reasons are many. (1) The cast is great: Patrick Stewart is a very fine actor and we should be grateful Roddenberry went to that lecture on Shakespeare. Brent Spiner is glorious as Data (thank god, no evil twins here and thankfully no Wesley Crusher either) and Malcolm McDowell gives us a wonderfully evil villain - actually he looks like Sting's evil twin. (2) Lots of Klingons! (3) Space Battle, Yeah! "Raise shields and lock on Phasers Mr Data!". (4) La Forge gets tortured. (5) The Enterprise (NCC - 1701D) gets totalled but Spot gets saved. (6) Troi doesn't do much of anything so we are spared her New Age pop psych ramblings.

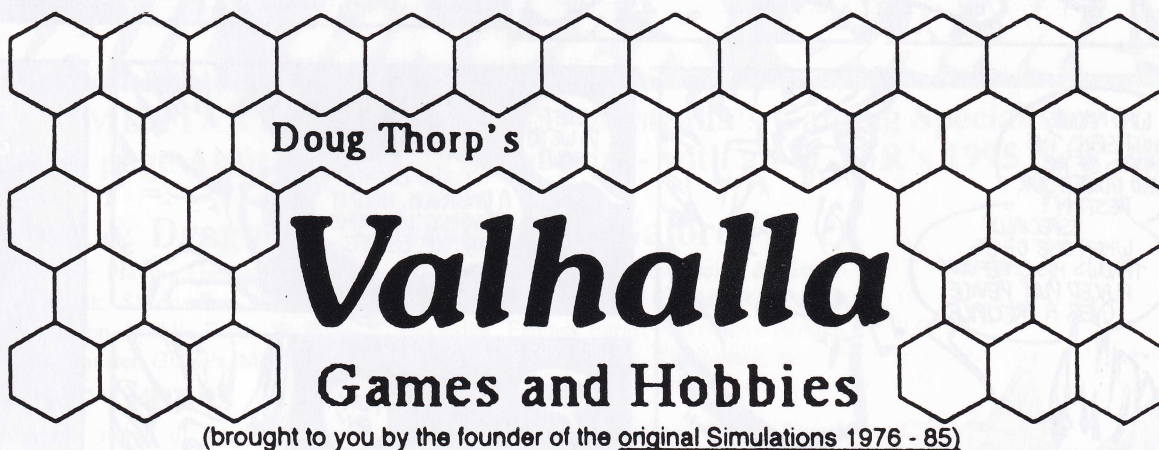
There are a horde of Trek related items on the market at the moment. But it's to the

past that I'm looking once more. My parents actually had this treasure hiding in one of their bookcases. The Making Of Star Trek, Stephen E. Whitfield & Gene Roddenberry (Ballantine Books 1968!). Its a rich source of trivia, some real howlers and should be read by all serious Trekkites. Unfortunately this copy is coming apart, the pages are yellowing and breaking into little pieces. The pictures are great though and the details fascinating. A sample:

"MAN HAS BEEN TOO LONG A PART OF EARTH TO BE TOO LONG SEPARATED. THEREFORE WE INTEND TO BUILD A SIMULATED "OUTDOOR" RECREATIONAL AREA WHICH GIVES A REALISTIC FEELING OF SKY, BREEZES, PLANTS, FOUNTAINS, AND SO FORTH."

One of Gene's Memos that litter the book. Remember that this stuff was written in the sixties. Sounds like a description of the TNG Holodeck doesn't it? All the stuff the effects budget couldn't handle for TOS obviously got stashed away for later use. Interesting, to a loony Trek fan like me; a definite Yes! See if your specialist book hunter can't find you a copy. With all the Trek material in print it might even be back in circulation.

"Make it so."



Doug Thorp's

Valhalla

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THE ADVENTURES OF THE

MEER

BY EDGAR + DANIELS

THE GARGANTUAN WORM BURST FROM A CLOSET IN WHICH IT COULD NOT POSSIBLY EXIST INTO A CHAMBER IN WHICH IT COULD NOT POSSIBLY FIT. BUT THIS WAS NO TIME FOR TRIVIAL CONSIDERATIONS OF LOGIC; THE GAME WAS AFOOT!



WHAT IS IT!?

SHUGG'ARLTH N'LART X'X'YYTH'LOB!

A SHUGG'ARLTH N'LART X'X'YYTH'LOB. IT MEANS CREATURE WITH LOTS OF SPIKES, TEETH, TENTACLES, A FOUL BREATH AND AN ATTITUDE. IT'S AN INTERDIMENSIONAL BEING THAT LIVES BEYOND THE EDGE OF THE UNIVERSE, PROBABLY SUMMONED BY SOME FISHING VILLAGE CULTISTS.

WHAT'S THIS SHUGG'OFF... ERR...

GURGLER.

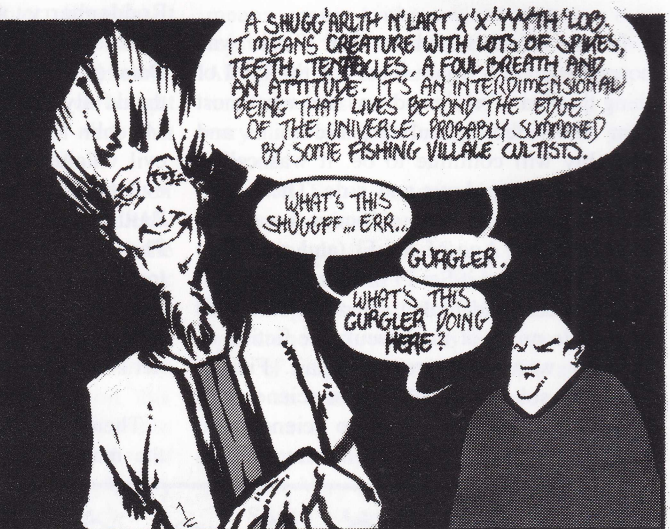
WHAT'S THIS GURGLER DOING HERE?



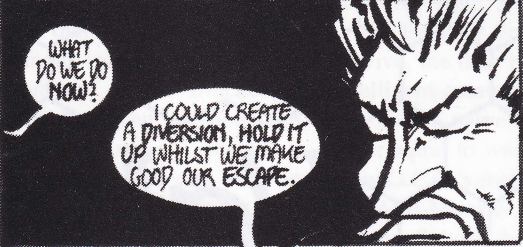
HANG ON. TIME OUT.



PARDON?



WHO KNOWS WHAT SPINS THE WHEELS OF HE WHO GUIDES OUR DESTINY? ESPECIALLY WHEN ONE OF US THROWS HIS CAREFULLY PLACED PLOT DEVICE OVER A PRECIPICE.



WHAT DO WE DO NOW?

I COULD CREATE A DIVERSION, HOLD IT UP WHILST WE MAKE GOOD OUR ESCAPE.



FINE!

PLAY ON!



ERR... GUNS?

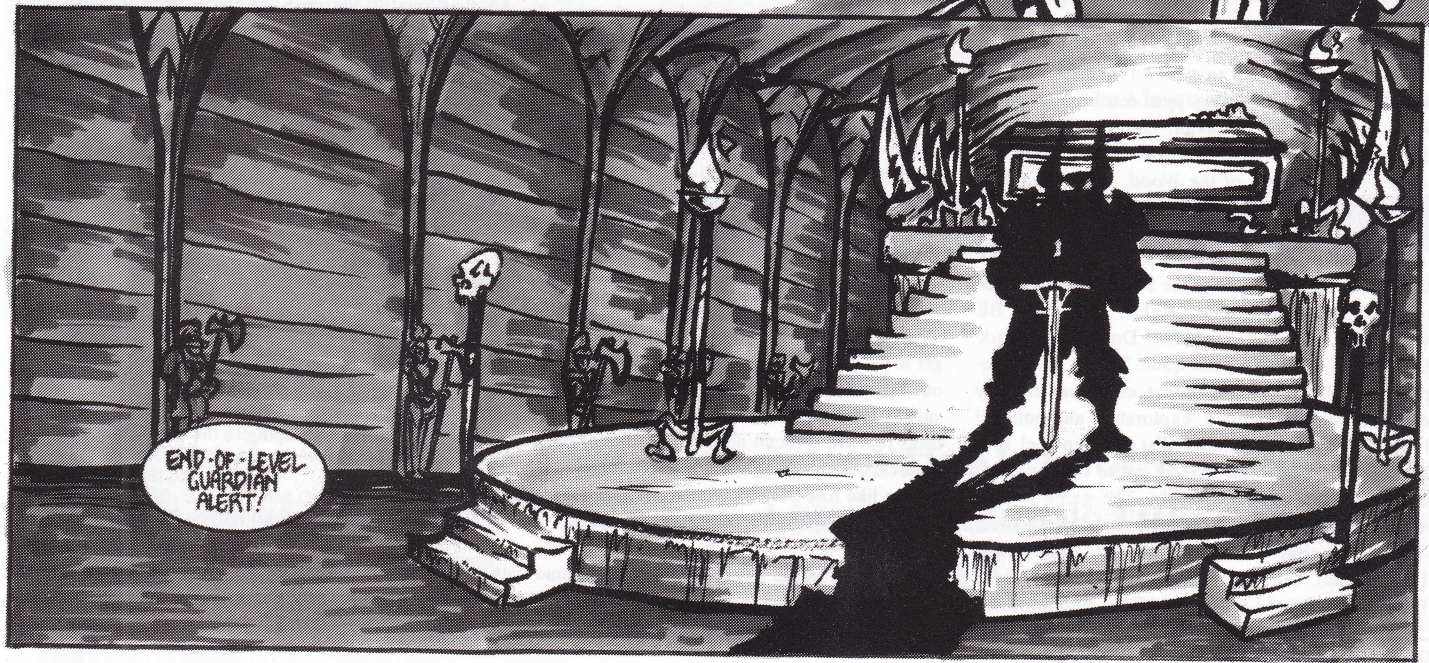
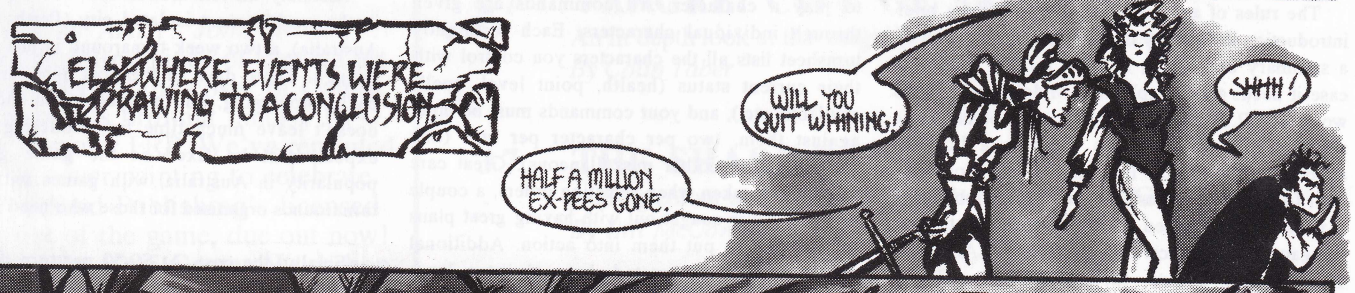
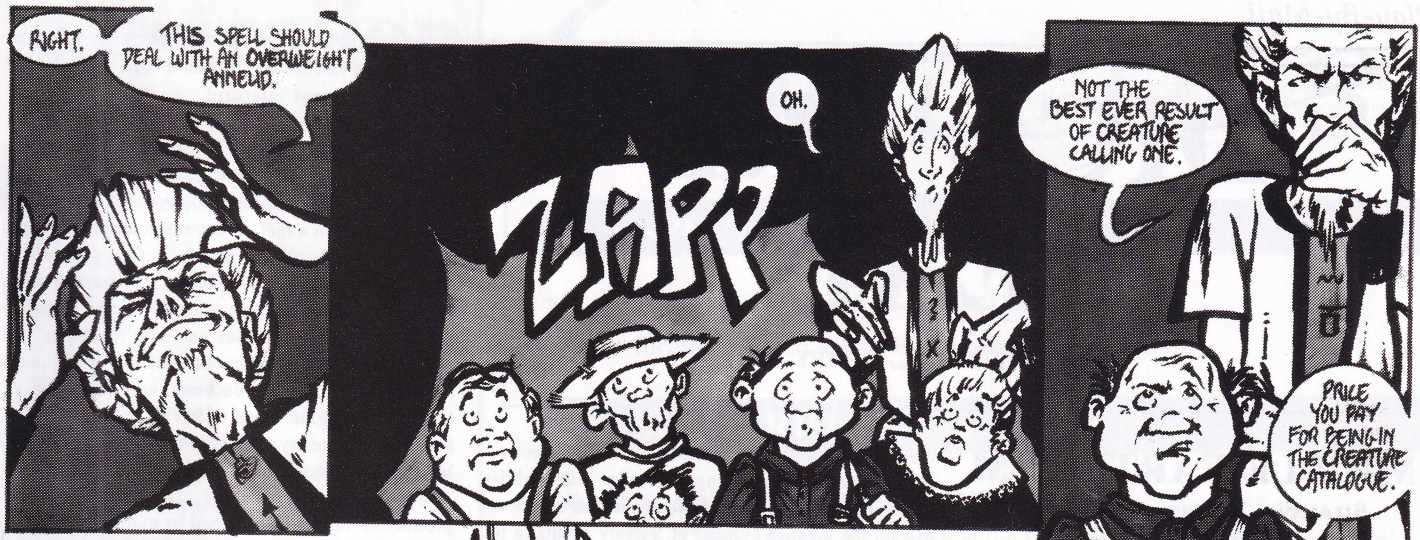
MEANWHILE, MILES AWAY IN A FAR SUNNIER PLACE, A GROUP OF HALFLINGS ARE SITTING DOWN TO EAT THEIR SUPPER...

UNCLE BOBO. WILL WE EVER HAVE ADVENTURES, SEE STRANGE PLACES, FIGHT MONSTERS AND PUT THE WORLD TO RIGHTS?



NO, COUSIN BIGTOE. THINGS LIKE THAT NEVER HAPPEN TO GOOD LITTLE





DICE ARE DEAD

Play-By-Mail Column

MIDDLE-EARTH PBM

Strategic Fantasy Games of
Australia Pty Ltd

Reviewed by Andrew Daniels

Play by mail? Me? I'm a role-player! Middle-Earth? No way, I hate hobbits! No getting out of it though, our illustrious Editor casually suggested either I review SFGA P/L's PBM, *Middle Earth*, or my favourite wizard character gets to spend his next vacation locked in a tomb with a dozen life-draining lichens. (Damn hard having an Editor who doubles as your GM).

So I drag my feet over to his desk. What have we got here? A large map of Middle-Earth. Colourful and well drawn. Things are starting to look up, I like maps! Secondly, a well-presented rule-book; well laid out, lots of interesting spells to cast (I love wizards), but *no index*. Am I the only gamer who can't memorise entire rule books cover to cover and would like an index to make that tricky rule just a little easier to find? That aside, my role-playing mind was intrigued by this PBM.

The rules of are logically set out; first a brief introduction to the Play By Mail hobby followed by a summary of Tolkien and his fantasy world. In case it needs to be explained, Middle Earth is the world of J.R.R. Tolkien's books on hobbits, magic rings, and elves, and this game is a licensed adaption of the Middle Earth milieu into a play-by-mail format. The atmosphere of Tolkien's books is reasonably transported into this game. Next come the game's mechanics. Some advice. READ THIS BOOK! Play a turn, then READ IT AGAIN, TWICE! I spent ten or so turns cursing the fact that I couldn't get my steel to where I wanted it to be, only to eventually have my eyes rest upon Order # 946 - Transport By Caravan! Doh! In addition to the rulebook and turnsheets you receive a regular magazine, *Whispers of the Wood*, which supplies updates, gossip, play hints etc.

OK. So I've wandered back to my cubby hole in the office and I'm scanning the book. What do I get to be (I'm a role-player, right? I need to BE something). A hobbit? Ugh! Elf? Double ugh! Dark Lord? Yum! yum! Well not quite. This is not a role-playing PBM. Its a game that combines fantasy elements with wargaming, exploration and political intrigue whilst maintaining that Tolkien feel of a large and living world. Players get to run a nation, or more specifically, a people. The game is split along traditional Tolkien lines into opposed factions - ten Dark Servants (Nazgul and some Dark Lieutenants), ten Free Peoples (Gondor, Sindar Elves, Woodmen etc.) and four uncommitted

Neutral Peoples. Each faction acts as a collective force aimed at destroying the other side, whilst within each faction your particular nation competes to gain the greatest number of Victory Points (a bit like cricket really). The Neutrals get to hang about, building their position until someone makes them an offer they can't refuse.

Once you've made your choice and been given your position, you're also told what your Victory Conditions are. Mine, for example, involve storing mithril, taking a population centre, and finding an artifact. This is a good innovation, in what is largely a wargame, because it gives you interesting stuff to do as well as mass your armies and plan your battle strategies. Within your Nation, you control everything (now we're talking my kinda game, megalomania!). You must husband your Nation's resources in order to create armies to further your expansionist aims (you haven't got expansionist aims, what are you, a tiddly-winks player?), protect your territories, create cities to increase your populations, try to keep the taxes under control, transport steel to where it can be turned into weapons and stuff, and the list goes on. Ah, but the game is more than a wargame after all, you do get to play a character. All commands are given through individual characters. Each fortnightly turnsheet lists all the characters you control with their current status (health, point level, spells available, etc.), and your commands must be input against them, two per character per turn (one specialised, the other miscellaneous). Great care needs to be taken when selecting orders, a couple of times I was caught out with having great plans but no one to put them into action. Additional characters can be created, but only at a large monetary cost, and money soon becomes rather a precious commodity.

Each character has a class, some can be multi-classed. Firstly, there's Commanders. These dudes run the place, move armies and organise your holdings. Second, comes the Mages, who are, well Mages! They throw spells which give you all kinds of edges in the game. Nuff said. Then comes the two more interesting classes; Emissaries travel to distant lands recruiting double-agents, or influencing other People's populations; and, Agents get to steal gold, assassinate your enemies, and root out distant secrets. Great stuff. As your character successfully uses his skills, they improve, making tasks that are difficult at the beginning of the game easier as it becomes more critical to succeed. Its almost like role-playing. Nick. Oh, he's gone home, must be getting late!

In play, I found I enjoyed mucking around with characters most. But you've got to be careful, I lost

two of mine in encounters with a barrow wight and a spider. Ettercap! Ettercap!

So what do you do in this game? Well, really the options seem to be endless. Exploring the world of Middle Earth is neat in itself, you get the feel of moving about in a real, living environment. If war is your bag, there's plenty of that. Before you can go invading the bad guy, you must organise your armies through recruiting, training, equipping (buy the best weapons, armour and war machines you can afford) and deployment. For the logisticians there's heaps to keep you busy, with navies to be built and everyone needs to be fed, the list goes on. For the treasurer types, there's plenty to keep you busy as well as you manage the Nation's finances. There are a number of different kinds of production ranging from food to mithril. These can be hoarded or used. You can even buy and sell from the Caravans (doing a bit of stock speculation). And like I said, if none of that grabs you, you can simply go exploring; the world is littered with ancient and powerful artifacts to be found, and characters from Tolkien's works to meet and have a chat with. The options and depth in this game are enormous. But now for a few criticisms.

Firstly, in the game in which I'm playing, there was little information forthcoming about what was happening elsewhere. The magazines were mostly filled with "how to" articles but very few reports of what was going on. So the only idea I had of how the rest of the world was getting on was seeing who had the most victory points on the front of my turnsheet and the odd communication (index cards) sent from other players. This really left me (a role-player used to instant interaction) feeling isolated; I still don't know who's winning the game, or even if I'm the last of the Free People left on the planet!

Secondly, the turn around time. For us poor souls in the world's most isolated city (Perth, Western Australia), a two week turnaround is just not long enough. Three days in the post here, three days back, processing, and a weekend in the middle doesn't leave much time for pondering. This, I expect, will be fixed as the game grows in popularity in Australia, with games with longer turnarounds organised for those who need it.

Finally, the cost. At \$9.50 per turn, twice per month, for a mortgaged fella like me this is an expensive game. I don't know if this can also be fixed as the number of games increase. Actually, I was lucky enough to have the first ten turns free as a review position. An indication of how the game sold me (a confirmed role-player, right?) was that I have continued to play, I'm now up to turn fourteen.

In conclusion, Middle Earth PBM is a top game. The good points far outweigh the bad, and it soon becomes addictive. It is a reasonably complex game which caught me, a first time PBMer, out a few times. The number of things to do and worry about become incredibly confusing early on, but this soon passes as you start to worry more about that vast army belonging to the blind Sorcerer sitting on your border!

So how did I go? I'll let you know next time, but for now my advice is for those even remotely interested in Tolkien or PBM, run, don't walk to your post office for a stamp and join this game! ■

Hello, Hello, What's All This Then?

This may be the first issue of *Australian Realms* that you have picked up (and hopefully bought, mind you) and you may be wondering who we are, and what we're all about. OK, we'll tell you, just as long as you return the favour. What was it about this issue that made you buy it? What did you like about this issue, and what did you hate? What would you like to see more/less of? You might not think we really care, but we do. Responses to previous Reader Surveys have helped to shape the magazine you have in your hands, and we're always keen to hear what our readers think about us. So drop us a line, by snail-mail or E-mail (nicklean@perth.dialix.oz.au) and let us know how we're doing.

Australian Realms is designed to be a role-playing resource, with articles and adventures that provide assistance, inspiration and entertainment for GMs and players alike. We won't be publishing articles that provide rules changes/modifications, or heaps of magical items and monsters. What you *can* expect is articles that make you think, laugh and genuinely add something to your role-playing experiences. Many of our writers are already highly regarded in the industry, and those that aren't already are quickly getting noticed.

We've come a long way since we started and have big plans to go ever further over the next few years. We hope you'll come along with us for the ride - it's sure to be fun.

Independent Voices

Our Editor's forays into the Internet have yielded a number of new contacts, including some small press US gaming companies, who often find it hard to break into the Australian market. Many of these companies produce games and supplements that rank with the best of the big name companies, and deserve better coverage. Let's do that right now...

Chameleon Eclectic produces the excellent *Millennium's End* RPG (see the review this issue), as well as *Fields of Honour*, a Historical Miniatures system for the battles of the 19th Century. Also on the cards is *Psychosis*, an RPG described as a combination of the movies *Brazil* and *Total Recall*!

Mind Ventures Games have released *Don't Look Back: Terror Is Never far Behind*, a "tribute" to the horror movies that we used to flock to the cinemas to see. If you're sick of the dark, angst-ridden games that fill the market, then maybe DLB, with upcoming releases called *Giant Psychic Space Insects* and the *Strange Files of Dr. Sorcis*, could provide an enjoyable alternative.

Black Gate Publishing have *Legacy: War of Ages* as their flagship publication (also reviewed this issue). They have a number of follow up releases scheduled for 1995 in support of this fine RPG - *Mortal Enemies: Sentinels* (an organization sourcebook) and *Shadows of the Past* (a historical sourcebook).

Conventions

We hope you all had a great time at the many conventions held over the Easter weekend throughout Australia and elsewhere. The staff at *Australian Realms* would like all convention organisers to know that we offer a FREE convention advertisement on this very page - just contact us with plenty of lead time and we'll do the rest.

We're also always available to visit any convention in the world, whether it be to flog you our magazine, hold seminars or just fall unconscious in your bar - just as long as you can find us an airfare for \$50 (Aeroflot you say? - OK, I can dig it, Comrade...).

The Big Boys (& Girls)

We've finally received the latest TSR catalogue, so we thought it was high time we brought you up to date with their scheduled releases for 1995. Apparently dropped from the TSR product line are the *Al-Qadim* setting (Lee will miss you, even if no-one else does), the *Amazing Engine* system and the *D&D* game. The big *AD&D* push this year seems to be for the *Planescape* (won't Adam be happy!!), *Ravenloft* and *Dark Sun* settings.

Notable releases include the re-release of the *Players and DMs* guides, and the inclusion of four "option" rulebooks, covering high level adventures, combat & tactics and skills & powers (Yeah right! - let's see how optional they remain). For those of you who would hate to miss having the full set, TSR have announced the *Complete Book of Necromancers* (for GMs

of course, can't have players playing bad guys...), the *Complete Barbarians Handbook* and (come on guys, give it a rest will ya) the *Complete Ninjas Handbook*. But don't miss the new collectible dice game. That's right - collectible dice!

Perhaps the thing that TSR should be given most credit for though is their continued support for new, young or inexperienced gamers, with a series of introductory AudioCD-based adventures, scenario packs and campaign settings providing the ideal starting point for non-gamers. Well done.

New Releases

Apart from TSR and the independent gaming companies we have already covered elsewhere, here are the notable April/May releases from the "regulars".

R.Talsorian Games: *Steam Age*, the first supplement for the *Castle Falkenstein* game is out now (Lee's already at the shop!). *VirtualFront*, the latest *Cybergeneration Documents of the Revolution* release will also be with us soon - get into it Chombatta!

Palladium: As our interview with Kevin Siembieda in this issue shows, Palladium have a busy 1995 planned. In stores over the coming months should be *Robotech: New World Order*, *Rifts World Book Seven: Undersea*, *Mystic China Sourcebook* and the *Scrapers* book for *Heroes Unlimited*.

FASA: Replacing Tom Dowd at the helm of the *Shadowrun* universe will be Carl Sargent. With many years experience in gaming, with a plethora of products for *Games Workshop*, *TSR* and *FASA*, *Shadowrun* remains in good hands. We've had confirmation that the *Shadowrun Australia Sourcebook* is set for release in early 1996. Hooray!

White Wolf: The fifth and final release in the *Storyteller* series is **Changeling: The Dreaming**. In *Changeling* you take the role of an outcast from the true fae, not quite faerie, not quite human, trapped in the harsh reality of the "real" world.

To coincide with the release of *Changeling* comes the new story-telling add-on system: the *Changeling Cantrip Cards*. Whether they will be part of a collectible series remains to be seen, but all indications are that the cards are to be used as a alternative to dice-throwing.

...see you 'round like a D100!

THAT WAS THE NEWS

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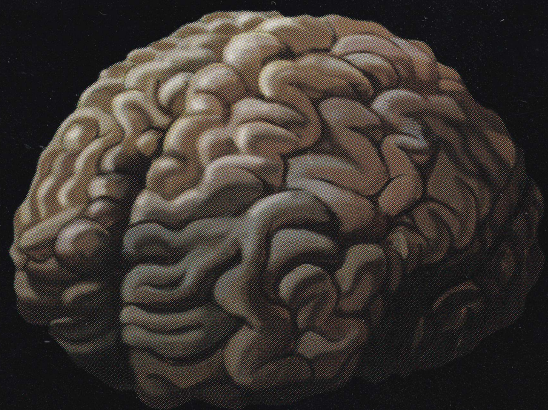


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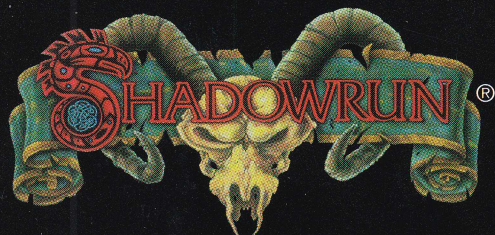
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